

# THE ORACLES OF GOD

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SAMUEL A. MARTIN

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introduction to the Old  
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# THE ORACLES OF GOD

*A Popular Introduction to The Old Testament  
Scriptures for the use of Bible Students*

PART ONE—OLD TESTAMENT

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## PREFACE

The purpose of this book is to supply the need of a convenient popular introduction to the books of the Old Testament, for the use of Bible Classes, and the general reader.

It is intended for popular use, and therefore avoids technical methods and critical discussion, but on the other hand, it is positive, and I hope not merely superficial in its presentation of the messages given by inspiration for our learning.

The extent of the work has been regulated by the aim to give as much as can be fairly well considered by a class in about fifty lessons.

It is presumed that the reader is tolerably familiar with the narratives of Scripture and the books most generally used for devotional reading.

No one can be too familiar with the contents of these Scriptures, but it is quite possible to have our knowledge so detached and ill arranged that we get confused and vague impressions of the whole,—possible to not see the woods for the trees. If this book helps to give a true perspective, and an harmonious view of the great redemption which is revealed in the Holy Bible, it will not have been written in vain.



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# THE ORACLES OF GOD





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## CHAPTER I

### THE BIBLE—INTRODUCTION

*"The Law of the Lord is perfect, restoring the soul."*

**T**HIS collection of books which we call the Bible occupies a place in our modern life that is entirely unique. They have profoundly influenced our development in civilization in every feature. They have molded our social order, dominated our ethics and formed our religion. Their teaching has permeated every institution, and to some degree affected the life of every civilized people in the world.

No other books can be compared to these either in the extent or force of the influence exerted on the race. They contain such a treasury of spiritual truth, and such a galaxy of beautiful ideals as could not be duplicated from all the literature of the world besides; and their teaching is so intimately associated with our civilization that a fair knowledge of their contents is absolutely necessary to an understanding of our history, or morals, or art, or literature.

On the first glance at these books we notice three features in which they differ from all other books that we read in our homes or study in our schools. First: they are of foreign origin, an importation, and not the product of our traditional culture.

Our civilization, as a whole, is an Aryan civilization. It is the product of the Indo-European race, originating in pre-historic times and coming down to us through Greece and Rome and Modern Europe. It has developed from age to

age, and has been modified by various influences from without, but it has never lost its continuity. It is, as it has always been, a body of tradition,—manners and customs, habits of thought, and modes of conduct—handed down from father to son, from generation to generation for thousands of years.

At a definite date, some nineteen hundred years ago, there came into this stream of traditional culture a new current from another source, originating with another race, developed to full maturity along other lines and under different conditions; and this current has blended with the original stream of our civilization and produced our modern world. The channel by which this current came to us is the Bible.

The Bible is the record of those revelations which at sundry times and divers manners God gave to the descendants of Abraham—the Hebrew race.

In the development of the human race, God assigned to different nations special tasks by which they achieved renown and made their contributions to the general welfare. Greece, for example, was “the mother of Arts and Eloquence.” Rome, the world’s instructor in politics and jurisprudence; and Israel was the great priest nation, “to whom were committed the oracles of God.” “Salvation is of the Jews,” and the story of that salvation is in their sacred scriptures which we call the Bible.

The culture symbolized by the Muses who dwelt by “Mt. Parnassus and the sparkling Helicon” is a great inheritance, which was formed by our fathers and handed down to us, but greater yet is that which comes to us from old Mt. Sinai and from Calvary, by the page of sacred scripture and the fervent words of prophets and apostles who wrote “that we might believe that Jesus was the Christ of God, and that believing we might have life through his name.”

Second: the Bible is of peculiar authorship. We call it a book, and so it is, for it has a unity of purpose, a constant point of view and a consistency of teaching that binds all parts

in harmony and gives a cumulative force to all its contents, so that we do well to call it all a book—one book—the book. Yet it is the work of many authors; its composition was extended over many generations—nearly sixteen hundred years. It reflects the features of a great variety of outward circumstances, and has the marks of many stages of civilization. Its literary form is varied in every possible way: it consists of history and poetry, philosophy and story, drama and parable, and precept and visions. Every phase of life is portrayed on its pages. It is the most realistic of books, yet contains the loftiest ideals. It is the most profound in its doctrine and the simplest in its style.

While we do well to call it a book, we also do well to remember that it is a library, a collection of independent volumes bound together in the perfect unity of a common purpose and a consistent doctrine. Our word Bible by its etymology very fitly illustrates this diversity and unity. Bible is derived from *βιβλίον*, a library or collection of books, from *βιβλος*, a book. Our Bible consists of sixty-six small volumes so intimately joined in harmony of contents as to be fitly called a book—the book.

The third peculiar feature of these books is their marvelous revelation of spiritual truth not otherwise discovered to the human mind. This quality we call inspiration; and by this term we mean that the men who wrote these books had some peculiar illumination in spiritual things, by which they were enabled to see and to appreciate the things of the spirit, and to open them to our understanding.

It is not easy to define exactly what this inspiration is, nor to apprehend distinctly how this influence of God's Spirit differed from that which is, to some degree, the privilege of all spiritually minded men; nor is it necessary to our present purpose that we should define it, or explore the problems of psychology involved.

We are here concerned only with the facts which are abundantly attested by induction from our own experiences and observation. Somehow the contents of these books do find our conscience, do appeal to what we recognize as noblest and highest in our nature, do satisfy our instincts of justice and mercy, approve themselves to our judgment and stand the test of time and experience as no other books have done, or approached.

The doctrine of infallibility rests on the simple fact that the teaching of these books has never failed. As Gamaliel shrewdly observed of the teaching of the apostles, "If this doctrine be of men it will come to nought, but if it be of God, you can do nothing against it." And now, some nineteen centuries after those words were uttered, we fling the same bold challenge to the world; Wherein have these books failed? Which one of all their promises has ever been broken? or what hope they offered been made ashamed? In view of these facts it seems quite within the bounds of simple history and common sense to speak of these books as the words of men who spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost; and to regard this Bible as the very word of God.

The word of God it is in very truth; but this assertion must be used with intelligence. It means that the teaching of the Bible is from God, and true as God is true. But it does not mean, as some men carelessly assume, that everything recorded here is true and to be commended. It does not mean that "Bible words" and "Bible characters" have some peculiar sancity because they are reported in these sacred pages. "Skin for skin. Yea all that a man hath will he give for his life" are words of the Bible, that is, they are recorded there as the utterance of Satan in the Book of Job, but the whole of that book is a demonstration of their utter falsity. The sins of David are faithfully recorded, but we are not left in doubt as to God's hatred of sin.

It is important also to remember that our interpretation of this record may be in error, and that our mistakes must not be charged against the Scriptures, even though such mistakes come down to us with all the authority of godly men and goodly scholarship. Mistakes do not become correct by growing old, nor falsehood grow less false by being long accounted true. The church may well continue to regard the Bible as the only infallible rule of faith and conduct until it fails in some respect of this high office; and to speak of it as the work of inspiration, so long as it stands so well distinguished from all other books in its spiritual teaching.

The list of books to be included in the Bible, and to be accounted parts of Holy Scripture is called the canon; and the selection of these books is spoken of as the formation of the canon. We do not know just where, nor how, nor by whom the canon of the Old Testament was formed, but sometime before the coming of our Lord the canon of the Old Testament was settled and contained the books, and only those, which we include today. The canon of the New Testament was completed during the life time of the apostles of our Lord, and was generally recognized and accepted early in the second century. The books included in the canon are as follows—

Old Testament: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, Ruth, I and II Samuel, I and II Kings, I and II Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, Daniel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obediah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi.

New Testament: Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Acts, Romans, I and II Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, I and II Thessalonians, I and II Timothy, Titus, Philemon, Hebrews, James, I and II Peter, I, II and III John, Jude, Revelations.

All the books of the Bible were written long before the invention of printing, and copies of them were made by hand and therefore liable to slight errors of transcription. The most ancient manuscripts of the Old Testament date from the year 916 A. D., and the oldest of the New Testament from about 331. These manuscripts show a great number of discrepancies, though for the most part these are minor and insignificant differences. The work of comparing these manuscripts and translations, and quotations made from Scripture by early writers, so as to determine as exactly as possible the original text, is called textual or lower criticism. So great has been the care in the transcription, and so profound the reverence for the very words of the sacred books, that we have been able to determine the original readings with much greater certainty than we have of any classical book of antiquity or even of mediaeval literature; and we may be confident that we have, to all intents and purposes, the very words of the men who wrote as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. The whole Bible has been translated into some five hundred different languages, and certain portions of it into many more. And every year adds to the list of translations and revisions of these versions.

The work of higher criticism is to determine the date, authorship, and mode of composition of the various books. The chief questions of higher criticism are, first, the genuineness of the book; that is whether, the book, as we have it, is the work of the author to whom it is attributed. For example, is the book called the Epistle of Paul to the Romans really the work of Paul. Second, the integrity of the book; is it all by the same author, or has it been revised or added to by later writers. Third, the date of the books and the circumstances of their composition, and, Fourth, the mode of their composition; whether original with the supposed author or merely compiled by him from earlier writings, and if so, what sources did he

draw on for his matter.

For the past half century there has been much activity in the field of higher criticism, and many radical theories have been advanced as to the date and authorship of some of the books; for example, the Pentateuch in its present form is considered by many to be a much later book than was formerly supposed; and, instead of being written by Moses, was the composition of some writer or writers of much later date who compiled these books "by piecing together verbatim extracts from older documents, making various changes and additions." The Book of Isaiah is thought by many to be the work of at least two authors. Isaiah, the son of Amos, probably writing chapters I-XXXIX, and someone else, at a much later date, composing the remainder, chapters XL-LXVI. Others divide the book into three sections and consider each of these as a collection of separate prophecies by different authors.

The whole field of higher criticism has been, and still is, a field of controversy, and no satisfactory consensus of opinion has been reached with regard to many of its problems. It is a most interesting field, and the discussion of its problems has contributed greatly to our knowledge of these books, but most, if not all, of its problems are of secondary importance, inasmuch as the value of the books depends but slightly on our knowledge of their authorship, or date, or mode of composition. Indeed some of the most edifying books of the Bible,—as for example the Book of Job and many of the Psalms, are of unknown origin. It is the character of the book that proves the author's inspiration, and not the author that implies the character of the book.

The varied contents of these books may be classified in any way that logic or convenience may suggest, but it is important that some order and method be followed that will present the matter in some clear form, easily held in memory. One convenient method of such classification is to start with the con-

ception of the Bible as *a record of revelations*, given at sundry times and in divers manners, and then make these times and manners the basis of our system of presenting the whole. This scheme would give us such heads as, The Revelation of God in his work of Creation, The Revelation given in parable and allegory, The Revelation in Types and Symbols. The Revelations of Prophecy, of Poetry, of History, Biography, and Philosophy. The chronological order of the books and the development of doctrine must be considered also, for the force and value of any revelation will depend to some degree upon the time and order of its coming.

A few words of explanation here may be helpful to an understanding of just what we are to look for under each of these heads.

*Creation:* The story of creation given in the Bible is very brief, though it covers an enormous period of time. It touches on a great variety of subjects, but its purpose is very simple and specific. It is not a treatise on geology or biology or physics or any other science. Whatsoever of interest it may contain on such subjects is altogether incidental. The purpose of the whole story is to reveal to us our place in the universe, our relation to God and to the world we dwell in. It defines our peculiar position as a part of the material creation and yet superior to it; formed of the dust and to dust returning, yet raised far above all material things by our spiritual life,—the breath of God by which we become living souls.

Every workman is known by his work. The Creator is revealed by Creation. Not fully of course, but to some degree what we are to believe concerning God is made known by his work of creation. All science is but the discovery of God's work of creation; this brief sketch of the beginning of things is of inestimable value in giving us the right point of view, and enabling us to form a right conception of the relation of the world to God.



*Parable and Allegory:* It is impossible to convey truth from mind to mind by words, unless both minds already have the same ideas associated with the words. There is no natural or necessary connection between any idea and the sound used to denote it. The only way in which new ideas may be expressed, new thoughts revealed, is by some kind of allegory—some presentation to the senses or imagination of objects or actions that are in some way analogous to the spiritual object or idea. Such symbols are necessary to the revelation of all things that cannot be seen or handled. Hence the fundamental notions of moral and religious truth are taught in parables or allegory or symbolic acts and objects. Thus the story of man's first disobedience is told in the allegory of "that forbidden tree whose mortal taste brought death into the world and all our woe," and our Lord taught what "the Kingdom is like" by many parables.

*Types and Symbols:* These are but the more elaborate and systematic form of teaching by analogy, "by meats and drinks and divers washings," which were the "shadows" of spiritual truth. The whole ritual of the Old Testament was a religious drama, a pantomime, in which the acts and objects used in worship represented the eternal principles of spiritual truth; and the sacraments and ordinances of the New Testament are but "sensible signs" by which the knowledge and benefits of redemption are represented.

*Prophecy and Poetry:* But such symbols must be interpreted, supplemented and expounded. This is the work of the prophet and the poet. The prophet is God's spokesman; to speak for God is his office. Both the prophet and the poet are seers, their function is to see the truth in its fullness and its beauty, and to body forth their visions and insight and foresight, so that all may see and know and appreciate the truth they saw.

*History:* Truth is never so clearly seen as when presented in concrete form—tried out and exemplified in the actual life

of men. The record of experience is history. A very large part of the Bible is history—a faithful record of what men have done, revealing the laws of God in their actual operation, and teaching in the most unquestionable way the everlasting principle that what a man soweth that shall he also reap. Biography is but the more profound and intimate form of history—revealing the inner side of the same experiences whose outer side is history.

*Philosophy* is the explanation of phenomena. It is the process of reflection by which the mind discovers the meaning of the facts of life. As when the Psalmist—Ps. VIII—observed the fact of God's goodness to so small and insignificant a creature as man, he reflected that man's greatness was to be measured not by his physical or material bulk or power, but by his spiritual nature—his angelic likeness, his overlordship and dominion over all creation. So the Book of Job, the Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and much of the prophetic books reveal, not the mere facts of experience, but the meaning of the facts. Philosophy above all other forms of revelation teaches the wisdom of God, and shows the sweet reasonableness of his dealings with us.

These "divers manners" of revelation are not separate nor independent, but rather various elements that combine to set forth truth in its fulness and beauty. They may be compared to the form and color and fragrance which are features of the flower, or to the light and shade and movement of the living world viewed from some point of vantage. So the story of creation, the symbols and the prophecies, the poetry and history and philosophy reveal the same truth, eternal truth, God's truth. These varied forms of revelation come with varied effect upon the same person. Some forms address themselves especially to our intellect, others rather to our emotions, or our artistic sense, and others are more effective to move our will to action. But each and all are directed to us, to each of

us, to every phase and faculty of our being, and the wonder of it is that these revelations never fail. They never contradict our reason; they awake responsive voices in our conscience; they evoke our admiration, and elevate our hopes and aspiration. Verily, their inspiring source, The Holy Spirit, "knew what is in man."

## CHAPTER II

### CREATION

*"The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof  
The world and they that dwell therein  
For He hath founded it upon the seas  
And established it upon the floods."*

"**I**N the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." This is the whole story of the origin of the visible universe; the present constitution of the world dates from this beginning.

What was before that date we know not. How long ago it was, or how long after any other event we cannot tell; nor why God, at that time, brought the heavens and the earth into being.

But two facts are here revealed; first, that God is the sole source and author of all things; by the word of his power they came and continue to be: second, the present order, the heavens and earth, came into being at a definite time, a time, very long ago, before which they did not exist, and after which they did.

But the act of creation involved much more than the bringing of matter into being. We may not think of the material world as ever having been an inert mass. From the beginning, in its very nature, every atom was endowed with marvelous and varied energies. All the properties of matter, such as weight and size or taste or color are the manifestations of some energy or power; and all these energies act according to some definite and changeless order. These modes and limits of activity we call the laws of nature. The force of gravity, of chemical affinity, of motion, light and heat and every other

quality or attribute of matter is due to energies which are from the beginning.

All science and philosophy is but the discovery of what has been since the day when God made the heavens and the earth.

All human skill cannot give to matter or to spirit a single property, or change by one hair's breadth the laws by which their various activities are ordered.

In the beginning the world was made, equipped, endowed and constituted, and that constitution has never been revised. Each atom is by no means the simple, passive, inert bit of matter that we used to think it, but an active agent capable of great variety of energies, more complex in its structure, and more varied in its powers than any machine that man has yet devised.

Then life with its mysterious power to appropriate and use the material substances, to build up the complicated organisms in which it dwells, and by which it performs its functions, and brings forth fruit after its kind, and so perpetuates itself, gives to the earth its beauty and its joy.

So comprehensive is the work of God's creation, which he did in the beginning.

From the beginning the heavens and the earth was a going concern, full of intense activity and ceaseless energy, regulated by immutable decrees and ordered by the most exact and comprehensive laws, which remain to this day as absolute and universal as at first.

To every atom and to every star, to every force and quality God said, as he said to the sea, "Hitherto shalt thou come and no further, and here shall thy proud waves be stayed."

But this world so completely constituted and well ordered was yet undeveloped. It is described as "waste and void." Modern science pictured it as a "fire-mist, tempestuous, lifeless and unorganized."

The process of development, as well as the initial act of

creation is ascribed to God. "The Spirit of God brooded over the face of the waters." As a bird incubates the eggs in the nest, so the spirit of God presides over the evolutions of the universe.

The order of development is briefly noted under six great periods, or "days", and the order of events is given as they would appear from the point of view of the earth.

First; light appears, and the distinction of day and night. Second, the firmament, or open space between the clouds above and the waters below. Third, the land appears in places and the ocean gathers in the lower portions of the globe. Third, life appears, and species of plants spring from the ground. Fourth, the sun and heavenly bodies appear, and the seasons are marked. Fifth, animal life in sea and land, "great sea monsters, and every winged fowl after its kind." Sixth, the higher forms of animal life appear, and last of all, man is formed as the crowning work of this long series, and to him is given "dominion over the fish of the sea and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth."

This outline has been elaborated and filled out in greater detail by the discoveries of science, but not a line has been changed or found in error.

It is a marvelous revelation of the order of the world's development, which, though written many centuries before the same truths were discovered by the light of science, could not be better told today.

"The footprints of the Creator" enable us to read in the rocks the self-same story that we find upon the page of Scripture, so far as the order of creation is concerned, and thus fortify our faith in the assurance that the scripture is to be believed when it adds the testimony, which the rocks cannot so clearly give, that all this is the work of a personal and loving God. It is not the work of blind and insensate forces, working under laws that chanced to be, but the orderly evolution of

a cosmic universe directed by intelligence and inspired by affection. "And God saw everything that he had made and behold it was very good." This is the act of a personal God. Physical forces, impersonal energy or "a creative impetus" has no power to recognize the beauty or excellence of its work. To call creation good implies a different and higher quality than any that the physical world possesses. It also implies more than intelligence; it implies what we call feeling, emotion or affection.

Still more clearly is the love of God revealed in the declaration that when sentient creatures—creatures that are capable of pain and pleasure—arrive, God blessed them—, gave them happiness, according to their nature and capacity. Rocks and seas and sky cannot be blessed—cannot experience joy or satisfaction, but living creatures of the higher orders can; and we read with interest that when this stage of evolution is reached God blessed them. So the animate world is full of happiness, of singing birds and playing youngsters, of contented flocks in green pastures and lizards basking in the sun.

When man arrives we read again, "God blessed them," and, furthermore, that he gave man the special blessing of "dominion over all the earth." Thus man was, in a manner, taken into partnership with God, made a creator, within the limits of his place a power, and given opportunity for growth in wisdom and nobility of soul by the exercise of reason and the bearing of responsibility.

Man is the crown of creation. This brief story is important chiefly in this that it reveals to us our place and our relations.

The greatest revelation given here is that man was made in the image of God. Indeed this is the greatest revelation ever made,—the most important truth in all the world. It is the basis of our hope of immortality. It is the pledge of God's unflinching care, and the reasonable ground of every spiritual aspiration.

Man's place in the order of the universe is entirely unique. His relation to the material world is close and necessary. From the dust we came and to the dust we go; the beasts of the field are in very truth our "little brothers," and, like them, we are nourished and sustained by the products of the soil. All our intellectual activities, and even our emotions and affections are conditioned by our physical frame.

By the special organs of sight and hearing and the other senses we gain knowledge of the world we live in, and by our nerves and brain the soul performs its functions. We are indeed fearfully and wonderfully made, a marvelous organism, "a harp of a thousand strings." So that men looking only on this instrument—this astonishing brain and nerve and muscular mechanism—are sometimes overwhelmed with admiration of it, and attribute everything to the machinery by which it is accomplished. But back of the brain, above the nervous system, in and through and over all these is that spirit which God gave when he breathed into his nostrils the breath of life and he became a living soul.

Man occupies a most important place in the scheme of creation, so far as we know he is the only rational creature inhabiting the material universe. It may be that there are other worlds where dwell God's creatures greatly superior to us in dignity and character, but if so they have no present relations with us; and so far as our knowledge extends, man is the center of the whole scheme of the world.

He is lord of creation, yet part of it, a very insignificant part if measured by his physical size or strength, a poor, puny, short lived animal.

"When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars which thou has ordained, what is man that thou art mindful of him" so the psalmist reflected, and so we all perceive that measured by any standard of measure that can be applied to moon or stars, man is a negligible quantity, and



his life "under the sun" vanity of vanities.

But he is not rightly measured by any such standards as may be used to measure stars or material worlds. He is comparable to angels, sovereign over the work of God's creative power, crowned with glory and honor of another quality from the glory of the stars.

So the story of creation culminates in this supreme revelation of man's dignity and worth. It is the most fundamental of all religious truth, the motif of the song that is sung in every page of holy scripture, and which is more fully harmonized long ages later in the promise "As we have borne the image of the earthly, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly" and "for this corruption must put on incorruption, and this mortal put on immortality."

"The heavens declare the glory of God  
And the firmament showeth his handywork"  
But, "Lo, these are but the outskirts of his ways  
And how small a whisper is heard of him  
The thunder of his power who can understand?"

## CHAPTER III

### THE STORY OF EDEN

*"Knowing God, they glorified him not as God, neither gave thanks; but became vain in their reasonings, and their foolish heart was darkened."*

**T**HE next great revelation is the sad story of "man's first disobedience and the fruit of that forbidden tree whose mortal taste brought death into the world and all our woe."

This is one of the hardest pages of scripture to interpret. The story of creation deals chiefly with the material universe, a visible heaven and a tangible earth. The discoveries of science and the tests of physical experiment have illustrated that story, aided our interpretation and confirmed our faith.

But this story of probation and of failure is not so easily read. It is obviously not intended to be taken literally. The garden whose trees bore fruit to eat of which was moral death or everlasting life; where serpents talked, and God walked in the cool of the day, all this convinces that we have here to do with allegory, with images of things, things of momentous import and of practical value, but set forth in figures, parables and symbols.

We must remember that this is not one whit the less reliable and true because it is not literal. In fact, it is the necessary means of setting forth new truth. Words are only signs of thoughts to those who already know them; they serve only to call up ideas already associated with them in the mind of him who hears them. But fit symbols can present truth more directly, by the association of familiar objects with the unfamiliar thought, and by analogy between the objects

and the thoughts make the thought clear to the mind,

The parables of Jesus were most profoundly true; they set forth principles, and relations that are eternal, universal, changeless, though the stories were probably not actual occurrences. So we have in this strange story of the Garden of Eden the history of an event of terrible consequences, more fully and more accurately told than literal words could make it. We have a picture of human experience, an experience as real as the material earth, as actual as the falling of a leaf, but presented in the form of allegory.

The general meaning of the story is clear and plain enough. It is the story of the beginning of human sin, the inception of that corruption of the whole nature which we call "original sin." It is the history of the fact that man is morally diseased, stricken with a fatal malady even from his birth. It tells how man fell out of harmony with God, and started the course of evil which rendered his whole nature abnormal, vitiated, pathological.

Whatever view we take of man's creation; whether the older one that man came into being fully equipped with all the attributes and faculties of manhood from the creative hand of God, or the popular teaching of our day that he is the product of a long and tedious process of evolution, struggling upward from lower to higher and higher forms of life till he became a living *soul*; in either case, there must have been a point of time, a stage of his experience when he first clearly recognized the distinction between right and wrong—when he passed from a negative state of innocence to an experience of temptation and of conscious choice between things permitted and things forbidden. This is inevitable in the nature of free agency. It is a stage of development experienced by every individual soul, and a necessary vicissitude of the race. This is the subject of the story of Eden. It is the story of the transition from the state of innocence, to a state of wilful opposition

to known law. It is the account of the origin of human sin, a great historic fact set forth in the allegory of the garden, the serpent and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

It involves the most profound problems of philosophy. Psychology, Ethics and Biology have each their separate interest in the story of the fall. Some of the questions suggested are not answered. The mystery of sin in God's world is not cleared—not considered. Sin is presented as already present, represented by the serpent who *tempts* Eve and Adam.

This revelation, like that of creation is limited to the matters necessary for our instruction in duty and worship; and such instruction is right plainly given and may be considered under these heads.

First, Before the fall, man had a clear knowledge of God's will. He knew that some things might be done and that others were forbidden. God had somehow revealed to him the limitations of his freedom. Whatever the tree and the fruit stand for in the allegory this much is plain, they were forbidden, and man understood that they were forbidden. This knowledge was perhaps given through man's moral sense, the instinctive protest against certain acts, that protest which every man feels in his soul when lust or pride or appetite urges him to do things which are opposed to God's will—to the fitness of things, against the constituted order of his world. This, which we call conscience, was no doubt simpler, less sophisticated, less biased than it is today in the fallen race, but probably it was essentially what we still have in our sense of moral obligation—the instinct of righteousness, which is probably a different thing altogether from what we call knowledge or intelligence.

It is well known to all of us that the sense of duty is not dependent on knowledge of reasons why. Indeed it is probably strongest when it is simplest—when it is nothing else but a feeling of obligation, a command, or in the familiar phrase of Kant "a categorical imperative." Such seems to have been

the character of our first parents' sense of duty. Eve's whole system of ethics and theology is in the simple creed "God has said." How he had said it mattered little. Eve had no vague incipient sense of duty, but a clear vision of the thing that ought to be, a creed, not of words perhaps, but of conviction that forbade certain things and enjoined certain others.

But there came a time when the natural appetites urge to excess or passion impels to lawlessness or ambition leads to selfishness. "The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life"—as St. John puts it—are ever present to us and bring the necessity of choice between God's will and our desire. It may not be wrong to feel these promptings of our nature. It seems impossible that rational creatures should not have these experiences. We see, as Eve saw, that the forbidden fruit "was good for food and pleasant to the eyes and to be desired to make one wise." This furnished the occasion for temptation, a motive for doing wrong, an opportunity for the deceiver to present his arguments.

The serpent—which may mean the devil, or a devil, or the principle of evil—makes the suggestion that the effects of evil will not be so bad as we imagine, "Ye shall not surely die" and moreover the result will certainly give wider knowledge. "Your eyes shall be opened."

Here we have the story of every temptation. Human passions, appetites or ambitions urging on, conscience holding back, and the powers of darkness advocating the evil course and the human will exercising its peculiar power of choice,—then the outward act. "She took the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also to her husband with her; and he did eat."

The consequences of a choice are endless. Each free act frames the conditions under which the next choice is presented. The *freedom* of today becomes the *fate* of tomorrow.

The consequences of sin are many and of various kinds, but they follow a regular order. The first effect noted here is

shame; the next was fear; then cowardice, then evasion and insincerity. When innocence goes out shame comes in. Shame is an emotion which is peculiar to man. The brutes have no sense of shame for they have no moral sense. Holy angels know it not, for they have no occasion for it. Man is ashamed because he has done wrong, and yet retains the sense of obligation to do right; hence he is conscious of his degradation, sensible of his debasement. Man by his first transgression lost his innocence, but not his moral sense. Shame is the kindly provision for our restoration. It should lead to repentance and to reform; but alas it is apt to lead through cowardice to evasion and hiding. "Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden." So man ever seeks to hide when he is ashamed. The trees of the garden, what are they but the activities of life? Who has not striven to hide from God and his own conscience by turning his mind to other things—any things, but his own past sins.

Lady Macbeth cries

"These things must not be thought

*After these ways; So, it will make us mad."*

But man cannot escape from his creator. Soon or late man must give an account of himself to God. His laws are over us, around us and within. "Whither shall I flee from thy presence?" But not only do consequences of our sin force us to an account, and the laws of nature claim their retribution with inexorable certainty, but God calls man to the consideration of his conduct. Man is rational and moral. He looks before and after. By his providence and by his spirit God is calling continually to man "Come now, let us reason together."

And in his divine compassion he calls to us not in the heat and passion of our offense, but by the sober second thought, in the calm hour of reflection. "*In the cool of the day they heard*

the voice of the Lord God." What a figure to express the sweet reasonableness of the Lord our God!

And there in the cool of the day God talks it over with Adam and Eve. He points out to them the inevitable consequence of their transgression. Sorrow, pain, oppression are the peculiar penalties which woman has had to bear as the consequence of human sin. Drudgery and unremitting toil—the very soil from which he must win his bread becoming stubborn and unfertile because of his sin. Such is man's special penalty. No better description could be given today of the curses under which the race has groaned and staggered all these centuries.

This the Lord God announces to the parents of the race, not in the tones of awful judgment, but in the kindly voice of sympathy and deep concern, "Like as a father pitieth his children."

God made no new law, nor devised a penalty for fallen man. The very constitution of his nature, which he had from the beginning, provides all this. It is the necessary consequence of the violence done to his own nature. It is the fruit of his own conduct, the inevitable sequence of cause and effect.

All this is history and science. It is only a more perfect representation of that which experience and philosophy have discovered.

But there is something else, and something better, in this story of Eden. Something that philosophy could not have guessed nor prophecy have dreamed. It is gospel. This is the important revelation of this scripture.

"And the Lord God said to the serpent, Because thou hast done this thing thou art cursed" \* \* \* "and I will put enmity between thee and the woman and between thy seed and her seed: it shall bruise thy head and thou shalt bruise its heel." That is to say, God does not, will not, give over man to the friendship and alliance of evil. He places himself on man's side, imposes penalty on the serpent and predicts the

age-long conflict between man and evil, a conflict in which the race will indeed be wounded, but evil shall be destroyed.

The "seed of woman" seems to point to some descendent of Mother Eve, a person, not the race, but a son of man, who, though wounded should be victorious. A champion, who should suffer but triumph. It can hardly be other than he who "was wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities, \* \* Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong because he hath poured out his soul unto death, \* \* and he bear the sin of many and made intercession for the transgressors."

So this wonderful allegory tells the story of temptation—the same in every age, experienced anew by each soul sprung from Mother Eve. It tells the story of the first transgression, precisely similar to all other faults of men. It tells of the direful consequence of that beginning of evil. It tells us what we might vaguely surmise by reading backward the page of history, but tells it in the unfading picture of inspired allegory, which amid all mutation and uncertainties of language stands eternal as the blue of the sky or the green of the meadows.

But all this would only deepen our despairing sense of utter hopelessness if it told only of man's fall. It would but confirm the judgment in history and philosophy that man is ruined and undone:—that the wages of sin is death.

Blessed be God, there is more here than the story of Paradise Lost. There is the sweet hope of Paradise regained. There is here the sunrise of a new day, the dawning of a day of battle, with the promise of an evening time of victory and everlasting peace.



## CHAPTER IV

### THE CONFLICT OF GOOD AND EVIL

*"Behold, this only have I found, that God made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions."*

**T**HE conflict between the seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman began at once. The incessant warfare between our evil desires and our better impulses—the clashing of the "law of our members" and the "law of our mind" began in Eden, and has not yet ceased.

Man is sent forth from the garden of Eden and his life has been a life of toil and sorrow. It is not to be supposed that God made any new law, or interfered at all with the constitution of man to drive him out of Eden, but rather we suppose his nature to have been from the beginning just what it is to-day, and that the change in his environment was wholly due to the change in his character. The laws of our moral nature, like the laws of our physical nature carry their own penalties. Misery is the fruit of sin, as pain and disease are the fruit of disobedience to laws of our physical being. Both laws are from "the beginning." It is still sin that keeps us out of Eden and dooms us to a life of toil and misery. Partly our individual transgressions, partly the faults of our fathers, and partly the disordered condition of the whole race, create for us an environment and a condition fraught with misery. It is our sin which lays our heaviest burdens on us. The bounteous earth is capable of furnishing mankind abundantly all that is necessary to his comfort and well-being, and that with no more labor than is wholesome and delightful; but our vices lay enormous taxes on us. It is the greed and lust and pride, the

sloth and selfishness of man that multiply our labors till that which was but pleasant occupation becomes a painful drudgery. The cost of war and drunkenness and social vice is tenfold the cost of bread. The greed and robbery which prevents fair and righteous distribution of the fruits of labor; the waste of pride and excess, and the afflictions of disease of mind and body due to our folly and transgressions are by far the sorest burdens which we bear. The very earth becomes unfruitful—man gets less out of the earth than he could get if righteousness was the rule of conduct in the world.

“The whole creation groaneth and travaileth” under the abusive rule of sinful man.

#### TYPICAL INCIDENTS

We have nothing that can be called history of the early ages of mankind. The period before the time of Abraham must have been enormous. The genealogies given in Genesis do not furnish sufficient data for computing the time, for many of the names there given are names of nations, not of men, and are probably intended to give the relations of the various races.

The few brief records of that long period of prehistoric time are valuable to us as typical examples of human experience and the attitude of God toward man. The sad story of Cain and Abel is the first and perhaps the most significant.

The story is brief and simple, but exceedingly instructive as an example illustrating the origin and effects of transgression.

The first fact of the incident is the fact of sacrifice, or the offering of their possessions as an act of worship. Man is by his very nature a worshipper. In all countries and in every age that history reveals, we find men seeking to commune with divinity. In most cases, their worship is crude and corrupt; often it is nothing more than an effort to placate the

invisible forces which men feel to be superior to them in power. The chief incentive to worship, in the mind of the savage, is fear. He feels that his life and welfare are not wholly in his own keeping, and reasons that the powers above him may be influenced, as he himself is influenced, by gifts and supplication, by professions of devotion and by praise. It may be that this feeling is spontaneous, arising naturally from his sense of dependence on something, and on his crude reasoning that the powers over him are to be won over to favor him by these acts of worship.

It is much more probable that the religion of savage people is the survival and corruption of an earlier and truer notion of God and our relation to him. All the features of heathen worship are much more like a degenerate state of a better conception, than a development of natural impulses.

In the sacrifices offered by both Cain and Abel we have the simple elements of all worship, that is offering to God of some fruits of our labor, something that represents ourselves, and expresses the desire to acknowledge our dependence, and our wish to please Him.

The second fact of the incident is that one offering was acceptable to God and the other was not. The explanation of this fact was given. It was not the character of the thing offered but the spirit of the worshiper that was important. "By faith Abel offered a more acceptable offering than Cain." His attitude of mind, his state and quality of soul are the essential matters; this, and not the character of the gift, it was that God "respected." This God distinctly announced to Cain in answer to his displeasure because his sacrifice was not acceptable. "If thou doest well shall thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well sin lieth at the door," thy door—the fault is in you. Here we have the fundamental principle of all worship; a principle repeated again and again by prophets and apostles and our Lord. "When ye spread forth your hands I will hide my eyes

from you; when ye make many prayers I will not hear; your hands are full of blood. Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes. Cease to do evil, learn to do well." So cries Isaiah, and the Psalmist says, "The acceptable offering is an humble and contrite heart." And our Lord more profoundly taught, "God is a spirit, and they that worship him must worship in spirit and in truth."

The next fact of the story is the murder of Abel by Cain. All crime, every evil act is the outcome of an evil state of mind, of wrong attitude toward God. "Out of the heart are the issues of life." To be right with God is to be right with God's world; to have wrong attitude toward Him puts us out of tune with the universe, and brings us into wrong relations with our fellow men. Cain's character is indicated by the fact that his offering was not acceptable. His conduct is the outcome of his state.

The consequences of his sin are next noted. These were of several different kinds.

First, God calls him to account. "The voice of thy brother's blood crieth to me from the ground." God is not only the creator but the ruler of the world. "He regardeth the children of men." "He executeth judgment and justice for the oppressed." Cain's sin finds him out. All sin finds out the sinner. No man can hide from God nor escape the consequence of his own acts. There is something terrible in the fact that man cannot get away from himself; the bitter pangs of remorse are never appeased: neither time nor place can offer refuge from the accusing voice of conscience. But still more dreadful is the thought that "Thou God seest me," and sooner or later each soul must give account of itself unto Him. The blood of the innocent cries to God, and because of this cry God executeth judgment. He is a loving God and therefore a God of vengeance. He punishes transgression that righteousness may flourish.

He announces to Cain the consequences that will follow,—follow, by the very nature of things—from his sin.

“Thou art cursed from the ground which hath opened her mouth to receive thy brother’s blood from thy hand. When thou tillest the ground it shall not henceforth yield unto thee her strength: a fugitive and a wanderer shalt thou be in the earth.” This is no new penalty; it is the consequence which follows sin in the very nature of things. The very earth—the ordinary joys of earthly life are denied to the sinner; he cannot derive the satisfaction that a good man gets from the good gifts of the natural world. Moreover he is despised and driven out of the fellowship of his fellow men.

Cain realizes the terrible consequence of his sin and cries that it is more than he can bear. He rightly counts the loss of God’s favor—the hiding from his face—the sorest of his penalties. It is not possible even now to state the universal penalty of sin more accurately than in the bitter cry of Cain. The loss of earthly happiness, the disfavor of God and the contempt and hostility of his fellow men. Then we have another and most important point of the incident. “And God put a mark upon Cain lest any finding him should kill him.” He is marked of God, not for judgment but for protection. Every sinner is marked of God, marked by signs that all men recognize, marked by his conduct and by his words and thoughts and imaginations; marked even in the face with the effects of sin. But when we see the marks of sin we should remember that they are marked in mercy. Marked not for us to avenge but for our pity and forbearance. Marked *lest* we should judge them and take vengeance.

“Judge not,” “Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord.”

The consequence of sin is never limited to the transgressor. No man liveth to himself. We are bound by many ties, of family and community and race, we are all members of one

body, and each is charged with a measure of responsibility for the common good, and this responsibility we cannot escape.

By his crime Cain brought distress to all, but especially to Mother Eve. She suffered, as mothers ever suffer through the sins of their children. One of her sons is dead, another is his murderer, and poor Eve begins to realize the deep meaning of the prediction spoken of God in Eden, "In sorrow shalt thou bring forth children."

#### THE PROGRESS OF CIVILIZATION

This is very briefly noticed in the advancement of the arts of civilized life. Animals are domesticated, metals are worked—even iron, the most difficult and most useful of metals is wrought, and musical instruments of both wind and strings are in use. This comprehensive glance gives us a view of well advanced civilization. We have also a bit of poetry in the peculiar parallel or reduplicated form which was peculiar to Semetic poetry,

"Adah and Zillah hear my voice,  
Ye wives of Lamech hearken to my speech,  
For I have slain a man for wounding me,  
And a young man for bruising me;  
If Cain shall be avenged sevenfold,  
Truly Lamech seventy and sevenfold."

The tradition of Cain's crime was still familiar, and the restraint placed on revenge well known.

#### THE INTERMARRIAGE OF THE GODLY AND THE WICKED

The distinction between those who were faithful to their knowledge of God and those who were godless seems to have

been clearly marked. How far this distinction was observed, and for how long, we cannot tell; but there came a time when it was broken down and the "sons of God—" the godly—attracted by the beauty of the daughters of the unbelievers began to intermarry with them. This seems to mark an epoch in history, and to have led to lower and more worldly ideals and to serious degeneration. The children of these intermarriages became warriors,—“mighty men” and violence increased on the earth. “The earth is filled with violence.”

### THE DELUGE

The specific charge of “violence” is only an item in the general change of deep and universal wickedness. The condition of man has become intolerable. In the forceful figure of the narrative, God repented that he had made man, for his corruption grieved him at his heart.

Man left to himself was hopeless. His condition is described in the most emphatic terms. “Every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.” He was *wholly* bad; every imagination of the thoughts of his heart *thoroughly* bad and *continually* bad. What could be done? was the problem of government. God rules in justice, but in mercy also. In justice he decrees the destruction of the wicked, that generations yet to come may be saved from utter degradation. But, that the race may have another chance, he saves the best there was, that by them a new and better start may be made. God’s mercy is here as always the extraordinary fact. Justice is a necessity; Mercy is a gift.

So St. Peter speaks of Noah and his house being saved, “*by water—*” not *from water*, as we are apt to think, but rather saved from the more terrible deluge of utter corruption, by the cleansing flood of righteous judgment.

The important lesson of the story of the flood is but little

dependent on the detailed interpretation of this narrative. Whether the flood was universal, or confined to a comparatively small region; how many species of animals were taken into the ark; the exact length of the time they were confined in the ark, are questions of interest to the geologist and archaeologist rather than to the student of the history of redemption. The great lesson of the incident is that which St. Peter drew from it. "The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly from temptation and to keep the unrighteous under punishment unto the day of judgment." As in the phrase of the prophet, He mercifully cares that "a remnant" be left, that hope may not perish from the earth.

It is from this side that the story of the flood must be regarded. Thus we see how God holds to his purpose not to give man up to his evil tendencies.

He is grieved at heart by our wickedness, by the misery and degradation wrought by sin, and in his tender mercy stretches forth his helping hand and sets our feet upon a rock and establishes our going.

To Noah God renewed his covenant, spoke words of kind encouragement and ordained the rainbow on the cloud to be the symbol of that covenant that is forever between Him and all mankind.



## CHAPTER V

### THE HOLY CATHOLIC CHURCH

*"His holy covenant: the oath which He sware to Abraham our father."*

THE call of Abraham was the greatest event in the history of our redemption from the time of Noah to the coming of Jesus Christ. It was the beginning of the dispensation of grace under which we live; not a new purpose, for the purpose of His grace is from the beginning; but in Abraham was initiated a new method, a new scheme of ordinances, by which His gracious will is revealed and executed.

From the days of Noah to the time of Abraham was a period of vast, but unknown length, unlighted by any recorded revelation. We can hardly suppose that all those ages were left in utter darkness. No doubt the righteousness of Noah and his family persisted for a time, and indeed it may be that righteousness flourished for many generations. This is probable because the world seems to have made good progress in the arts and social order, and such progress is not made when men are morally corrupt. The periods of growth in civilization have always been times of high morality, though the attainments of such periods may be retained long after men have become corrupt, for God is slow to wrath.

The time of Abraham falls within the range of what we call the light of history, a rather dim light to be sure, but in the recently discovered records of that ancient land of Chaldea we have the evidences of a civilization well developed, highly complex, and, in some respects, as brilliant as that of our own day. In the arts of war and peace, in material welfare and

political organization, the age had attained to a high degree of culture. The primitive man that figures so largely in the theories of sociology, if he ever existed anywhere, had disappeared from Chaldea ages and ages before the time of Abraham.

Once for all, let it be clearly understood that from the time of Abraham, whatever may have been before, we have nothing whatever to do with "primitive man," or the tottering footsteps of an infant race. In the story of Abraham we have to do with a very ancient and highly developed civilization. Chaldea and Egypt were then as highly organized, as far from primitive, as any part of Europe is today, and probably the Hittite Empire, on whose border Abraham dwelt, was not far behind in its development.

While Abraham's own interests were chiefly in his flocks and herds and wells of water, he had the traditions of a great people, and was in actual touch with all three of the nations we have named.

The common assumption that Abraham's point of view was that of the primitive and unsophisticated barbarian is utterly false and fatally misleading. The whole story of his life portrays a man of dignity and poise, simple and direct in thought and speech because of firm and intelligent convictions, and the calm assurance of a conscience void of offense. Not a single word or deed recorded of him reveals an uncouth or barbarian trait. Abraham was a gentleman of such quality as is not easily matched in any age, nor surpassed by the ideals of any civilization.

The significance of these facts is important in the study of the religious faith and forms of worship revealed through him. He builded his altar wherever he pitched his tent; he offered sacrifice and praise and communed with God in the manner of one who was well assured of the propriety of such a service.

The God of Abraham was certainly no Sun Myth nor per-

sonified natural force but "the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth," a personal God of infinite worth and majesty, but who might be spoken with and supplicated and adored.

There is, in short, no vestige, hint, or shadow of a fact on which to base the theory that the conception known as the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob was evolved in the mind of the Jewish race and perfected only by the philosophers and theologians of the seventh and eighth centuries.—B. C.

We do not know how much of Abraham's knowledge of God was given by special inspiration, and how much of it was due to the traditions from the days of Noah and the common heritage of his race. But we do know, both from the old Chaldean records, and the page of Scripture, that the religion of his time had become perverted and hopelessly corrupt. The incident of Melchizedec, "a priest of the most high God," who was revered by Abraham, seems to indicate that the knowledge of the true God was not entirely obscured. It would seem rather that a faithful remnant still remained to witness the truth to the world, and that of this remnant God called Abraham to begin a new dispensation, that the knowledge of God's gracious purpose might not perish from the earth.

The call of Abraham was not unlike the call of Noah. It was a special act of Providence to save the world from ruin and the race of man from death. In Noah's case, the separation of the good from the evil—at least the better from the worse—was final and complete. In Abraham's call the separation was not so absolute, nor the judgment on the evil so terrible. No overwhelming flood of righteous wrath, but the tender voice of divine compassion called Abraham to separate himself from the evil associations of his home and country, that he might lay foundations for that institution by which the scheme of our redemption was wrought out. He was chosen to found a nation which should be the priest nation of the world, the mediator of the world's salvation, the custodian of

the oracles of God, and from whom should come the "light to lighten the Gentiles."

In this event we have the inception of that great institution which we call the Holy Catholic Church, the introduction of a means of grace by which His purpose should be realized. Like all really great events, it was not initiated by blowing trumpets or shouting multitudes, but by the quiet response of a human soul to a call of duty, as God gave him to see his duty.

How God spake to Abraham we do not know, nor how much he foresaw of that long course varied discipline by which his seed should be fitted for their office and perform the same; but, somehow God gave him the necessary knowledge of His will, and a clear conviction of his own duty. However much or little he may have known of the details of God's plan, one thing he knew, that God had called Him; and "by faith Abraham when he was called of God obeyed to go out unto a place he was to receive for an inheritance, and he went out not knowing whither he went." The statement that he knew not whither he went seems to mean that he had little knowledge of God's purpose beyond the fact of his own duty, and the assurance that by obedience he would bless the world.

The Threefold promise which accompanied the call contained no detail, but is sublimely comprehensive.

It was personal—"I will bless thee and make thy name great."

It was national—"I will make of thee a great nation."

It was universal—"In thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed."

All these promises were amplified from time to time, but this first call and its triple blessing gives in outline the entire covenant, the basis of his hope and ours. It is the great charter of the Holy Catholic Church. It defines the purpose of the church—to bless all families of the earth. It reveals the basis

of our hope and confidence, for it is God's work. It specifies our reward, we are blessed in blessing others. The "chosen race" were chosen not to any selfish advantage nor to immunity from obligation, but, on the contrary, they were called to a service of great responsibility.

This office and responsibility is the inheritance of the church of all ages, for, "if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed and heirs of the things promised to him." Whatever questions may be raised as to the special functions of the church,—its relation to the state, its authority over the individual soul, its responsibility as a corporate institution, or any other, they must be answered by reference to this fundamental and essential purpose for which it was ordained and instituted, namely, to be a blessing to all families of the earth.

The promise that his name should be made great was the least important item of the threefold blessing offered to Abraham, yet God has never forgotten it, but fulfilled it in all generations for nearly four thousand years. It is indeed one of the most remarkable facts of history that the name of Abraham is more widely known and honored than the name of any other man who ever lived. The Jew, the Christian, and the Mohammedan unite in paying honor to the name of Abraham. "The most diverse races of men find one common meeting place at the tomb of him who bore that unequalled title—'the friend of God.'"

So God has kept his promise for almost forty centuries; and the most wonderful fact of it all is that He has thus fulfilled His word by the free actions of all these generations who have done honor to Abraham, with no thought or intention of fulfilling prophecy.

The promise that he should become a great nation has been no less literally fulfilled; for the descendants of Abraham were, and are, a great nation, a nation with the most remarkable history; a nation that never counted for much in the political

affairs of the world, only for a few years—under David and Solomon—rising to the dignity of a second class world power, and during by far the greater part of their history subject to some other nation, and for nearly two thousand years without a national organization, without a country, and without a bond of union, still a great nation, a peculiar people, a wonderful race, scattered over all the earth, subjects in every nation, associated with every form of human enterprise, and yet a distinct and separate people. A great nation, forceful, shrewd, and thrifty, they have survived all manner of oppression, persecution, and hostility, and are to this day one of the great nations of the world, a people to be reckoned with in every civilized country.

But the personal and national blessings, promised so distinctly and so marvelously kept, are only the preface and preliminary to the great blessing assured to Abraham and to his seed. The promise that in them all nations of the earth should be blessed rises above all personal and national hopes as Mt. Sinai towers above the foot-hills of the desert. This promise gave a hope which reaches out across the ages to the far horizon of earthly history. It looks beyond all confines of time, ignores the rise and fall of empires and the vicissitudes of fortune, and lays hold of things eternal. It looks to the "better country," to "the city which hath foundations whose maker and builder is God."

God's plans make little account of time. He took millions of years to bring the earth to its present state. He takes twenty years to bring a human body to maturity; and the possibilities before the human soul are infinite, but "known unto God are all his ways from the beginning."

When we recite the familiar words, "I believe in the Holy Catholic Church," we make a very great confession. We profess our faith in, and our allegiance to, an ideal framed by God's abounding grace and revealed for our acceptance, not fully, "for we see through a glass darkly," but in outlines that

are distinctly drawn and changeless.

The whole scheme of the covenant is an evolution; first the man, then the nation, then all families of the earth. "First the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear," is the usual order in all the works of God. The revelation of God's will can be made to us only so far and so fast as we have eyes to see it; and the realization of his purpose must be timed to the slow progress of our souls' capacity and the subjection of our will to His. The race as well as the individual must work out its own salvation, nevertheless it is "God that worketh in us both to will and to do of His good pleasure."

"The gracious revealer while ever keeping in view his ultimate design, must connect the particular recipient with that design in a way suited to his whole position. In accordance with this rule, after the promise, came the law." And the law hath been our tutor to bring us unto Christ.

The gracious purpose which was in the mind of God from "the beginning" announced in Eden, confirmed to Noah, is, in the call of Abraham, more definitely outlined and its method more distinctly revealed. From that time there is no break in the continuity of its development. Long and varied has been the history of the church since Abraham's day, but the bruised reed has never been broken nor the smoking flax been quenched: and we have the comforting assurance that He will not fail nor be discouraged till He have set Justice in the earth.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE PRIEST NATION

*"Ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests and an holy nation."*

THE period from Abraham to Moses covered about four hundred years. For the most part they were dreary and uneventful years, during which the seed of Abraham gave little evidence of special grace or spiritual excellence. These years, however, were necessary to the development of the race that should perform the high office assigned to them in the divine plan of redemption.

"I will make of thee a great nation," was God's promise to Abraham, and in this period that promise is fulfilled by the natural growth of the family of Jacob—seventy souls—who went down into Egypt till they became a multitude large enough to form a nation, ready to be organized and fitted to perform their office as the priest of the world.

The dispensations of Providence by which this preparation was accomplished are quite easily understood as we view them in retrospect, though doubtless very strange and puzzling to those who passed through them. For three generations they lived in the freedom of the open fields and tent life of southern Canaan. Then they were transplanted to the highly organized life of lower Egypt and for some time flourished in the rich pasture lands of Goshen. Thus they were brought into contact with the highest civilization of the world of that time. But the race prejudice of the Egyptians prevented their becoming absorbed into that nation: and the fear that they might become an element of danger to the state in case of war with the nations of the East, with whom they were connected in



blood and language, led the government to use measures of restraint and oppression, growing more and more severe till they were reduced to actual slavery, and most inhuman methods used to prevent their increase. Thus they were segregated from the race of Egypt, and a certain degree of national feeling was developed, the beginning of that race solidarity which has made them a peculiar people ever since.

The first three generations, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, form a distinct epoch, commonly known as the Patriarchal Age. The great events of Abraham's experience we have already noticed, and we have seen that he was the worthy founder of a great institution. His immediate successors shared with him the honor of special revelations, and the privilege of laying that foundation on which the church of God was built.

Abraham was a great man, and, even aside from his peculiar honor as a man chosen of God to initiate a great scheme of redemption, would command our interest and respect by virtue of his character and talent. We cannot say so much of his son or grandson.

Isaac seems to have been a man of strict integrity, peaceable and pious. He was honored by a special revelation, renewing the great covenant promise made to Abraham. "In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed." Gen. xxvi:4. He was directed to remain in the land of Canaan which his seed should possess in the years to come. So Isaac dwelt in the land where he was born and prospered, and in a good old age came to his grave "as a shock of corn cometh in in its season." The best biography of Isaac is the simple statement that "he digged again the wells of water which they digged in the days of Abraham." He was a fine example of the quiet, faithful, unheroic saints, who do no brilliant deeds nor lead great enterprises but at the post of common-place and routine duty keep the faith and work out the purposes of God.

Jacob was a different type from either Isaac or Abraham.

He lacked the greatness of Abraham and the integrity of Isaac. Shrewd to the verge of dishonesty, and calculating to the point of meanness. He was his mother's favorite, and failed to develop in his early life the traits of manliness essential to nobility. Yet he had in him, underneath the crust of selfishness, the potency of good which the hard school of adversity and sorrow developed into positive and lofty virtue. He is the type of those

"Whose youth is full of foolish noise,  
Who wears his manhood hale and green."

It is suggestive of the breadth of the divine purpose that it lays hold of such diverse and faulty agencies, and elevates to honor not only the noble Abraham, but the common-place Isaac and the faulty Jacob. Jacob occupies a large space in the narrative of the world's redemption. He forms the last link in the patriarchal chain, and gives his name to the nation that was to be the priest of the world. To him God repeated his promise, Gen. xxviii:14. Thus to the third generation, in the self-same words, God establishes his covenant, "Thou shalt be a blessing. In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed."

This prediction of a Holy Catholic Church, is the central fact of all the story of the patriarchs. It is the only point of great and permanent importance in their experience. They left no mark on the political condition of their times; they made no contribution to science or to art. They were neither kings nor warriors, statesmen nor philosophers nor poets. They were not identified with any affairs beyond the narrow limits of their pasture fields and wells of water. Yet these men have somehow been impressed upon the world's imagination as no other men who ever lived have been. Their names are known and honored, their descendants have persisted for some forty centuries distinct, peculiar and forceful. Only as we look back

from the vantage ground of accomplished facts can we at all appreciate the greatness of their calling, and the fact that their calling is their greatness. Only as foundation stones in the temple which the living God has builded do they have immortal names.

Jacob's prophecy upon his death bed, Gen. XLIX, wherein he gives that wonderful forecast of the future of each of his sons, was in fact, what it seemed to Jacob to be, a vision of the distant future; the evening forecast of a day to come after the long dark watches of the night had dragged their weary length along.

The central feature of that prophecy is too remarkable to pass unnoticed. It is a part of the predicted destiny of Judah, and reads, "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, till Shiloh come, and unto him shall the gathering of the people be," Gen. XLIX:10. However this may be interpreted in all its details, there can be no doubt of the essential point, that the tribe of Judah should survive as a tribe until a prince should come to whom, in some sense, the "peoples" of the world should gather. In the light of the promises already given, together with those that followed ages later by the mouth of Isaiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel, there can be no doubt that this prophecy distinctly means the Messiah—The Prince of Peace.

With this remarkable prediction the voice of inspiration paused, and no word of revelation is recorded for some three hundred years.

#### ISRAEL IN EGYPT

The story of Joseph is probably the finest specimen of narrative literature that has ever been written; at least I know of none in which so many points of excellence are found so well combined.

Good stories, like all good things, must be made of good

material, must be narrated with artistic skill, and must have some important bearing on the welfare of the world. Fiction can only approximate this ideal; history may realize it, but is rarely presented with artistic skill; biography more frequently approaches perfection, but the best subjects of biography are not often picturesque enough to make an interesting story.

In the story of Joseph we have a rich abundance of the most interesting matter; a hero of attractive personality, and marked ability; he achieves remarkable success, and at every step of his progress his hold on our admiration and affection grows. The personal element is constantly illuminated by our interest in the great scheme of the world's redemption of which his life is one important link.

The incidents of the story are full of picturesque and thrilling interest. His childhood and his father's special affection; the base villainy of his brothers who sold him into slavery; the Egyptian slave market; the house of Potiphar; the loyalty of the boy who would not wrong his master, nor betray the lewdness of his master's wife; the dreams of the butler and the baker; Pharaoh's dream; Joseph's promotion and success; and his magnanimous treatment of his older brothers and his affection for his little brother, Benjamin. I know of no other story so rich in varied interest, nor any which is told with such exquisite skill. The style is as simple as a child's, yet it would tax the most artistic writer of short stories to tell it half so well. Moses was great in so many different ways that we rarely appreciate the fact that he stands among the very first of the great literary artists.

In addition to its literary merit, the story of Joseph records some incidents of heroism that are of the finest quality. The story of Judah begging to be taken as substitute for Benjamin, to endure the horrors of the Egyptian prison that his father might be spared the anguish of losing his favorite son, the child of his old age, is one of the finest bits of heroism ever achieved

by man. There are some nasty stories recorded against Judah, but we are willing to forget them when we hear him say, "Now therefore, I pray thee, let thy servant abide instead of the lad, a bondman to my lord: and let the lad go up with his brethren. For how shall I go up to my father and the lad be not with me? lest peradventure I see the evil that shall come to my father." Read the whole story—Gen. XLIV.

The place of Joseph in the story of our redemption is of great importance, yet it seems entirely secular. He does not appear to have had any special revelation, nor any spiritual insight into the divine purpose which he was helping to accomplish. He was, as we would say, a layman; and his function was, like that of Cyrus of whom God said, "I have girded thee, tho' thou hast not known Me." So do men in every age advance God's kingdom by faithful loyalty to the work God's Providence brings to their hand, though they may not be highly spiritual, nor enjoy the prophetic vision.

From the time of Joseph to the time of Moses, we have no record of the spiritual of the seed of Abraham. It was a period of preparation, in which a nation was growing, segregated from the nations of the world, yet kept in close contact with the best the world had to give them.

It is not to be supposed that during all those weary years the children of the patriarchs thought nothing of the promises, nor that they failed to ponder and discuss the wonderful calling to which they were called. It is certain that the traditions of the visions of the patriarchs were cherished, for when Moses was raised up for their deliverance he found some,—perhaps but few—who still clung to the promises made so long before, and cherished the hope which Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob saw so brightly shining on the fair, but far, horizon.

God's plans make small account of time. With him a thousand years are as a day. The promise to the patriarchs embraced three separate articles, a personal, a national, and a uni-

versal blessing. The first was literally fulfilled. The second has been quietly approaching its fulfillment during the three centuries that have rolled by. The family of Israel came into Egypt. The nation has come into being, a great host, a multitude in whose veins ran the blood of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

The fullness of the time approaches, and God prepares the means for the next act in the great drama of the redemption. No doubt God could have devised some other means of making known his will; but, in fact, He has very rarely used any other means than prophecy, that is to say, He has spoken by men, He has moved human spirits by the influence of His spirit, and thus He speaks.

Moses was the first man to whom the name of prophet was distinctly applied, for he was the first man whose chief office was to reveal God's will to others. True, Adam and Noah, and the patriarchs were means of revelation, but their messages were directions as to conduct and promises concerning what God would do. The work of Moses was distinctly and almost exclusively to reveal God's will to others, to direct them. He was in the fullest sense God's spokesman, and this is exactly the meaning of the word "*πρό φημί*," to speak for.

It is never wise to speak of one divinely appointed work as greater than another; we are not in a position to judge; but it is evident that different preparation is needed for different tasks. The work which was now to be done was the organizing and training of a nation for the priesthood. Israel was the raw material out of which a church was to be made—very raw was the material and exceedingly intractable.

Israel went to Egypt as a family of seventy souls all told. They had now become a great multitude. This multitude is to be constituted a nation, and organized a church. They are ready to begin their training for the office of the priesthood—

the priesthood of the world.

They were certainly a most unpromising candidate for such holy orders. The sons of Jacob had not attained to any high degree of moral character when they went to Egypt; they were little better than barbarians and of low grade morality. It is not probable that they grew in grace in the untoward circumstances of their bondage. Their readiness to relapse into idolatry shows how the false gods of their masters had corrupted their faith in the God of their fathers.

It is probable that many of them were skilled workmen, but it is not probable that the masses of the people were anything but ignorant and stupid and depraved. The effects of slavery are inevitable; and their cowardice and childishness prove that they afford no exception to the rule. Stiff-necked and rebellious are epithets applied to them by the prophets; and the words are fully warranted by all their history.

To make of such people a nation, which should in due time bless all nations, was certainly no task for any ordinary man. But no ordinary man was called to undertake it, but one who, take him all in all, has no peer among the heroes of the world. His preparation for the work was elaborate and thorough. He was adopted by the daughter of Pharaoh, and was probably brought up in the court of Egypt. At all events, he received the best education possible at that time; which was probably the most highly cultivated age of the most cultivated nation of ancient times. At the age of forty, by a rash act of sympathetic indignation, he banishes himself from Egypt. The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews seems to intimate that it was not fear of punishment that led to his flight, and it is probable that the killing of a petty task-master by a prince of the royal house would not have been considered a very serious offense. And we are probably to gather that the incident was rather the occasion than the cause of his decision to renounce the prospects of preferment as a prince of Egypt, and to accept the

fate of his own kindred; and perhaps he even then cherished the hope of their deliverance.

His long sojourn in the wilderness of Midian was no doubt quite as necessary to his preparation as was his learning in all the wisdom of the Egyptians. At the end of that period of preparation comes the divine call to the great work he was to do.

#### THE CALL OF MOSES AND THE EXODUS

Words are very imperfect means of expressing thoughts, symbols are much better. Words are artificial; there is no real connection between any thought and the sound by which we name it. Such conventional arrangement by which a certain sound is used to denote a certain object is limited by its very nature to a narrow and superficial application, but a symbol, such as metaphor or parable, is capable of wide and varied use, suggestive of many relations and rich in all manner of associations. Moreover words are very unstable, they shift and change their meaning and become misleading or devoid of content. Purple used to denote a color which we now call crimson—indeed it meant blood-colored; the word has changed its meaning, but blood is still blood-colored, and will always remain the same.

If therefore, we would have permanent records or immutable revelations, symbols—similitudes or allegory—are the better medium. The account that we have of the call of Moses is a fine example of the skillful use of words and symbols combined.

When Moses fled from Egypt, he went to the land of Midian, there married and kept the flock of Jethro, his father-in-law, in the wilderness that lies about the mountains of Horeb, or Sinai. It is highly probable that the pitiful state of his kindred people under the cruel hands of their Egyptian task-masters was much in his thoughts and the possibility of their de-



liverance often considered. However this may be, his mind was somehow well prepared for the revelation God was about to give him.

One day he saw a strange sight, a bush that burned with fire, and yet the bush was not consumed,—fit symbol of the people, persecuted, yet not destroyed. Then, as he looked and wondered, “the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of the bush,” and the angel called him by name and said, “I am the God of thy fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.” “And the Lord said, I have surely seen the affliction of my people which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their task-masters; for I know their sorrows: and have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them out of that land, and to bring them into a good land and a large, unto a land flowing with milk and honey,” “Come now therefore, and I will send thee unto Pharoah, that thou mayest bring forth my people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt.”

Moses is appalled at the magnitude and difficulty of the task, and pleads his inability to undertake it. God reasons with him, encourages him, promises to be with him and give him success.

The dramatic parable by which God persuades him is very interesting. “And the Lord said unto him, What is that in thine hand? and he said, A rod”—his shepherd’s staff, the badge and implement of his calling. “And He said, Cast it on the ground”—that is, leave your present occupation. “And he cast it on the ground and it became a serpent and Moses fled from before it”—the new task to which he was called was dangerous and Moses feared to take it. “And the Lord said unto Moses, Put forth thy hand and take it by the tail”—take up the task I give you, take it prudently but fearlessly. “And he put forth his hand and caught it, and it became a rod in his hand.” It should be his proper calling, a veritable shepherd’s

rod, but of a different flock. Thus God, by miracle and parable and comforting speech, persuades Moses to undertake the work, in the assurance that it was God's will.

Then we have the marvelous story of the Exodus, a story full of all manner of signs and wonders, of thrilling incident and bold adventure. The courage of Moses' appearing before the King of Egypt, his dignity and his persistence are quite as wonderful as the miracles and special acts of Providence by which God authenticated his message and executed his divine purpose.

The details of his appeal to Pharoah, the plagues of Egypt, the dreadful final stroke of death on the first-born of every home, the miraculous passover, the flight, the crossing of the Red Sea, and the tedious and turbulent progress through the desert to the great encampment at the foot of Mt. Sinai, need not be here rehearsed. Read it in full in Exodus III—XIX: 2. And we shall now pass on to the great events which form the culmination of the story of the Exodus, which was the giving of the law, the organizing of the seed of Abraham into a nation and a church, the consecration of this nation to be the priest of the world.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE THEOCRACY

*"The Lord is King, forever and ever."*

**W**HEN God called Moses and charged him with the task of bringing the children of Israel out of Egypt, He gave him the distinct promise of divine help; and added this specific token, "This shall be a token unto thee that I have sent thee: when thou hast brought forth the people out of Egypt, ye shall serve God on this mountain."

When the people had made their escape from their oppressors, and, by God's help, had crossed the Red Sea; had survived the perils of the wilderness, and were gathered safe in their tents at the foot of Mt. Sinai, the Exodus was an accomplished fact, and the token was realized.

The particular task which God had assigned to Moses was performed. He had brought the children of Israel out of Egypt, even as the Lord had spoken.

But the Exodus was only the first stage of their progress toward national independence and universal priesthood.

Moses was obliged to undertake a task so difficult that even the Exodus itself must have seemed a small thing in comparison.

Here was a great multitude of not less than 2,500,000 people in whose veins ran the blood of Abraham, heirs of the promises made to their fathers, having a great destiny but very little present fitness for the work they were destined to perform.

In addition to these children of Israel there was a "mixed multitude" of low caste Egyptians who had joined themselves

to the Exodus in the hope of bettering their condition. These had to be taken care of and governed somehow; and this added not a little to the difficulty of the task already very heavy. This great multitude were not a nation, but only the raw material out of which a nation was to be formed. They had no doubt some knowledge of the promises made to their fathers, and some common aspirations toward the national life that the traditions of their race set before them. But their ideals were very imperfect, and they had but vague conceptions of the calling to which they were called; nor had they in adequate degree the qualities essential to the realization of that high calling.

They were for the most part ignorant and inexperienced in all the virtues needed to plan or guide their own affairs, totally unqualified to form for themselves a government or social order by which the general welfare might be promoted.

To Moses almost alone fell the task of devising and constituting such laws and offices as were necessary to bind them together as a nation, to provide for their common defense, establish justice and promote the general welfare.

On the other hand, it was an opportunity to institute a new order, to establish an ideal commonwealth, to frame a government according to the eternal principles of righteousness. It was a situation remarkably free from the embarrassment of tradition, of vested interests, of caste and social distinctions, all of which make reform so difficult in long established nations.

It was an opportunity, such as the world has never seen before or since, to build the structure of society from the very bottom, to make a new departure in the course of human history.

A great host of human souls, segregated from the world and alone with God, gathered by God's special providence before the sublime cliffs of old Mt. Sinai to be consecrated to the holy office of the priesthood of the world. It is a great oc-

casion.

The distinction which we commonly make between secular and sacred duties is wholly artificial. The separation which is usually made between the functions assigned to the civil government and those assigned to religious organization has no basis except in convenience. An ideal government would include the regulation of all activities that have any influence or concern with the general welfare, and while the varied duties of government may conveniently be assigned to different institutions, such as church and state, the important fact to be kept in view is that the eternal principles of all righteousness are eternal; they have their source not in the will nor in the acuteness of human wisdom, but in the will of God as that is expressed and embodied in the constitution of the world.

No legislation can in any manner or degree affect the laws which are in the very nature of the universe. Justice and Mercy can no more be changed by royal decree or statutes than the laws of chemistry or physics.

In the ideal government conceived by Moses this is the fundamental article *God is King*.

God is King, not because the people elected him, not because Moses instituted a form of government that recognized God's absolute authority and sovereign power, but because *He is King*.

"The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof  
The world and they that dwell therein."

God *is* from all eternity the source and author of all law, He is the only judge of right, He is the sole and sovereign ruler of all men.

The essential purpose of all government is to define and secure to every man the fruit of his own labor and the exercise of all his rights; to promote the common welfare and rightly

distribute the inheritance of the race. The particular offices and methods by which these purposes are accomplished is a matter of secondary importance. The great matter is to secure harmony, to have the attitude of mind brought to accord with the laws which are in and through the whole constitution of the universe.

That is to say, the ultimate purpose of all government is moral. It has to do with character, for from character springs conduct. Only when "every thought is brought into subjection to the obedience of God" is the divine order of human society realized.

This conception is the very core and corner stone of the Mosaic scheme of government. The Theocracy was framed and constituted on this foundation *God is King*, the one and only supreme and absolute sovereign.

The whole system and scheme of social order is constructed around this central thought. It is given the place of prominence in every revelation of the law. It is embodied in the first commandment of the decalogue. It is reiterated in the book of the covenant. It is the essential thought in the great summary of the law which our Lord called the "first and great commandment"—"Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord, and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart and with all thy soul and with all thy might."

The wisdom of Moses is nowhere more manifest than in the restraint he exercised in not attempting to formulate a complete and final code of laws; and this is the more remarkable in view of the fact that no one ever saw so clearly or affirmed so confidently the fact that the principles of justice are immutable. A smaller mind, almost certainly, would have attempted to put these principles into legislation for all time. But Moses also perceived that statutes are nothing more than applications of eternal principles to conditions, and that conditions changing makes necessary changes in the statute laws.

He chose, therefore, to put the emphasis of all his legislation and his exhortations on the great underlying principles, and trusted the conscience of the people to dictate from time to time the regulations necessary for the maintenance of justice and the promotion of the general welfare of the people.

The Theocracy was probably the simplest and yet the most complete system of government ever devised. The sovereignty of God and the equality of all men in their rights before Him, were practically the only articles in their constitution. The statutes and ordinances are comparatively few and simple, and for the most part deal with *violations* of the great principles of their constitution. The thought seems to be that when men recognize the sovereignty of God, and the brotherhood of man no laws will be needed; that is to say, perfect liberty is possible when all men seek to conform their lives to the divine order of the universe, which is no other than the will of God.

The revelation of this system of government, the formal organization of the nation was made as they were encamped at the foot of Mt. Sinai and it was one of the greatest events of the world's history, and its most important feature was the giving of the Ten Commandments.

#### THE TEN COMMANDMENTS—THE DECALOGUE

The work of Creation, as we have already remarked, consisted not merely in the act of bringing the heavens and the earth into existence, but included also the endowment of every created thing with certain specific qualities, powers and modes of action.

From the beginning, every element of matter has acted in certain definite ways, and its ways of action are called its *laws*. For example, all matter attracts all other matter in proportion to its mass and inversely as the square of its distance. This we call the law of gravitation; which simply means that mat-

ter is endowed with the power to attract other matter, and exerts that power in this specific manner and degree. So, all that we mean by natural law is the order and degree in which the things which God created are able to act. All these laws are permanent and immutable. They were made in "the beginning" and have never been revised. Till heaven and earth pass away no jot or tittle of these laws shall be changed. Indeed, if any of the laws of nature should be changed the present order of the heavens and earth would pass away.

The establishment of this order, the fixing of the mode of action of every created thing is what we mean by the constitution of the universe. The whole world material and mental is a *cosmos*, a system, in which every part is correlated with every other. Nothing is more absolutely settled in the realm of nature than the uniformity of the activities of every material mass and atom—which we call the laws of nature.

It is not so generally recognized but no less certain, that the moral universe is just as absolutely regulated as the physical universe.

The constitution of the moral world is from "the beginning" and right is always right, not because we find it so, but because it *is so* by the constitution of the world:

Murder and lust and the worship of false gods were always wrong, and must be wrong so long as the present order of the world remains.

The Ten Commandments are a revelation—an unveiling, a bringing forth to light and knowledge truth that dates from the day when God made the heavens and the earth and constituted the order of the universe. There is no *mystery* in the *Decalogue*. It deals with duties which all reasonable creatures recognize as necessary if men are to dwell together in peace and safety on the earth. It defines that which is less clearly revealed in the works of nature—written in the human heart and manifest to human reason.



From the very dawn of civilization there must have been some recognition of the rights of individuals and some thought of the relations of man to man and of man's relation to the world in which he lives. Long before the days of Moses there were codes which, like the Decalogue, aimed to define these relations and protect these rights. The recently discovered code of Hammurabi is an example of such definition which is of special interest because it was framed long before the time of Moses and was probably well known by him, and may have had much to do with the form in which the divine commandments were given; for God adapts his form of revelation to the capacity of the mind to apprehend it.

The great importance and peculiar excellence of the Decalogue is not the novelty of its contents, nor the originality of its form, but in its *completeness* and *perfection*.

Like the Sermon on the Mount, like our Lord's Prayer, like all great revelations, it is remarkable for its simplicity. It covers the entire field of human conduct, but contains nothing that is unnecessary. Every evil way is hedged off and forbidden by the principles defined in these ten commandments. Yet there is nothing local, temporary, or provisional. They are absolute and everlasting. They have the sanction of divine authority. They are not only the expression of God's will as embodied in the order of the universe, but they were revealed and published by his express and definite command. They were certified by the word of God as the divine order of human life. They form the only perfect definition of a righteous life, and as such they furnish an infallible standard of conduct till heaven and earth pass away.

It is significant that these laws are for the most part negative in form, not directing what we should do, but prohibiting what we may not. They fix the limits of our freedom, define the scope of our proper activities; within these limits man is at liberty, but beyond these he may not go, because he would

thereby invade or violate the rights of others. This consideration brings to view the principle which underlies the whole law, that is, its purpose to *protect the rights* of all God's creatures.

One may not kill, because he would thereby violate another's right to live. One may not steal, because each man has a right to his own. False worship destroys the truth; adultery destroys the purity of family life; false witness takes away the right of some one. So in all the ten commandments the aim and purpose is to conserve and protect the rights which in the order of the world belong to the children of men.

The fourth and fifth commandments are positive in form, but their purpose, like that of all the others, is to protect and preserve, in the one the foundations of spiritual life, and in the other, the dignity and sweetness of the family life.

All human rights are but our claim to the share of gifts of nature assigned to us by the order of the universe. The eternal sanction of all law is the will of God to "destroy them that destroy the earth."

This great revelation—the Decalogue, occupies the central place in the system of government that was ordained at Sinai.

It was the nucleus around which the whole order of worship was formed; and it was the essence of all the statutes and ordinances that were drawn.

The supreme importance of the Decalogue was indicated by the intense emphasis placed upon it by the manner and circumstances of its publication. The giving of this law was the crowning event of the whole Wilderness experience of Israel.

The people delivered from the cruel bondage of Egypt, led in safety through all the dangers and distress of the great and terrible Wilderness, and gathered peacefully at the foot of Mt. Sinai, they are ready to be instructed in those things most necessary to their welfare, both moral and religious.

To impress upon their minds the transcendent worth of these

great fundamental laws, every means available is used, and every circumstance accumulated that would add dignity and majesty to the occasion. The time and place, the solemn preparation by fasting and washing, the awful grandeur of Mt. Sinai veiled in clouds and flashed with lightning; the strict exclusion of man and beast from the sacred precincts, the long-drawn trumpet call, then a solemn stillness—then God spake all these words,—

“I am the Lord thy God which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.

Thou shalt have no other gods before me.

Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth:

Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; and showing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments.

Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.

Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.

Six days shalt thou labor and do all thy work: but the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates:

For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day and hallowed it.

Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.

Thou shalt not kill.

Thou shalt not commit adultery.

Thou shalt not steal.

Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.

Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maid-servant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor anything that is thy neighbour's."

These commandments were then written on two tables of stone: these were encased in a golden casket—the ark of the covenant—and placed in the inner sanctuary of the sacred tabernacle, and the whole system of worship and social order constructed upon them. They were and are and ever will be the definition of all righteousness, the measure of man's rights.

## CHAPTER VIII

### DEUTERONOMY

*"The Judgments of the Lord are true, and righteous altogether."*

**T**HE Book of Deuteronomy is properly a book of prophecy. In some respects it is the greatest of all prophetic books, for it gives the clearest and most complete exposition of the principles that are embodied and implied in the call of Israel, and in the commandments, ordinances, and ritual of the Old Testament.

It has been called the most spiritual book of the Old Testament, and this is true in the sense that it sets forth most vividly the relation of God to man, and the divine purpose which is to be fulfilled in human history.

The name, Deuteronomy, signifies the second giving of the law; and it does give the substance of all the commandments, statutes and ordinances that are recorded in the earlier books. But it is by no means a mere repetition of these laws. It is rather the recitation of the law as the text from which the author preaches a series of great expository sermons, setting forth the meaning and purpose of it all; and on this exposition bases the fervent exhortation to obedience and fidelity. All the discourses are based on history; the appeal to the people to be faithful is grounded on the gracious dealings of God with them in the past; the warnings and the protests, the tender pleadings and the fearful threatenings are alike sanctioned and certified by the revelation of God's character which they have seen in his good providence and tender mercies.

For this reason the history of their wandering in the wilderness, from the time God brought them out of Egypt down to

the time when Moses delivered these discourses, is fully, but briefly, given. But the gist and purpose of the book is neither in the history nor in the law, but in the prophetic revelation of the meaning and the purpose of that which God has ordained for Israel to accomplish.

The whole book may best be conceived of as *a treatise on the Scheme of Redemption*.

The question of the authorship of the book is somewhat uncertain. The traditional view is that it was written by Moses shortly before his death; the account of Moses' death being added by Joshua immediately after that event. The book itself does not claim to have been written by Moses, but rather purports to be the work of some one who reports the words of Moses, adding a few words of introduction or explanation here and there to set the time and place and circumstances of the deliverance of these discourses more clearly before the reader.

Just when or by whom this report was written, or just when the book as a whole was put in its present form, are matters of comparatively little interest or importance to us in our attempt to understand and profit by its contents. There is no reasonable doubt that we have here a faithful presentation of the teachings of the great law-giver, and a genuine record of his inspired prophecy.

The book is indeed a logical necessity, for it is a summary and an explanation of the entire work which God wrought by the hand of Moses—a great prevision of the scheme of redemption which the priest nation was to mediate for the world. It is a grand review of one great epoch in the history of that redemption, and the preface and introduction to the next. It is like the report which some officer, charged with some great enterprise, would make, whereby his successor might understand the work accomplished, and the lines on which it should be carried on to its completion.

The necessity for some such work is the more apparent when

we consider the unique office of Moses. The fulness of the time had come when the nation to whom the oracles of God had been committed had completed their preparation and were about to enter on the possession of their inheritance, and assume the responsibilities of their mission—a responsibility borne hitherto by Moses, almost alone.

No other man in the world's whole history has been so fully the father of his country—the builder of his nation. When we remember that he was, in native ability, in education and experience, far superior to all the people whom he led out of Egypt and organized at Sinai: that he had exercised the various offices of civil, military, and religious dictator: that at the time he delivered these discourses he was almost the sole representative of the generation that came out of Egypt, and that he had seen the whole generation that he now addressed, grow up from childhood, we can imagine something of the profound and tender solicitude with which he regarded them; and the fervid zeal with which he would exhort them to fulfil the splendid destiny they had received as a birth-right, and on which they were about to enter. How he would view with apprehension the dangers they would encounter, the temptations they would meet, the mistakes they might make! He knew their weakness, their raw inexperience, their many faults and the vices of their blood.

No wonder that he pours out his very soul in exhortation and entreaty, in warnings and threatenings, in appeals, impassioned and inspired, that the promised “light to lighten the world and the glory of Israel” might not fail to appear “as the mouth of the Lord had spoken.” Knowing what we do of Moses and the circumstances of the time and place, we would expect just such a message from his lips, just such exhortation as this book records. It is a great book, by a great man, on a great occasion.

## CONTENTS OF THE BOOK

The book is composed of four discourses with a suitable preface to each, and an occasional note, added, apparently, by the editor or reporter of Moses' words. These discourses were delivered at different times, and are founded upon different texts, but the themes are very similar and the same thoughts are often repeated and the same warnings and exhortations drawn from the different considerations. The following table of contents will be found convenient in the study of the book.

Title Page. Ch. 1:1.

Editorial Note. 1:2.

*First Discourse.* 1:3—IV:40.

Text—Historic Sketch. 1:3—III:29.

Instruction and counsel. IV:1—40.

Note. IV:41—43.

Preface to second discourse. IV:44—49.

*Second Discourse.* v:1—XXVI:19.

Text—Commandments, Statutes, and Judgments. v:1—  
VII:26, and XII:1—XXVI:19.

Exhortation and Admonition. VIII:1—XI:32.

*Third Discourse.* XXVII:1—XXVIII:68.

Text—The public ratification of the laws and statutes.  
Ch. XXVII.

Warnings and threatenings. XXVIII.

*Fourth Discourse.* XXIX:1—XXXI:8.

Text—God's covenant with Israel—XXIX.

Encouragement and Admonition. XXX—XXXI:8.

Note. XXXI:9—13.

Preface to the Song of Moses. XXXI:14—30.

*The Song of Moses.* XXXII:1—43.

Note on the Song. XXXII:44—47.

Preface to the Blessing of Moses. XXXII:48—52.



*The Blessing Wherewith Moses Blessed Israel.* Ch. XXXIII.  
Note on the Death of Moses. XXXIV.

## THE WITNESS OF HISTORY

The religious teachings of the Old Testament are verified to us in many ways. They find our conscience: they satisfy our reason: they stand the tests of time and experience: but, in commending the doctrine, the chief appeal is made to history—to facts done in the sight and hearing of men, and duly certified by witnesses. Philosophy may add her testimony to corroborate the teaching of history—to interpret the facts, but the basis of our faith is laid in the works of God in creation and providence—things “not done in a corner” but “in the face of all people.” “I am the Lord thy God which brought thee out of the land of Egypt and out of the house of bondage,” is the real preface to all the exhortations which chiefly compose this book.

By the rehearsal of Israel’s history Moses lays the foundation for an appeal that cannot be gainsaid or ignored.

The most interesting and important feature of this narrative of their experiences is the attribution of all their success to the providential hand of God. There was never any constraint upon their freedom, but such as is common to all people. They fought their battles, endured their hardships, accepted or rejected the counsels of Moses as they chose, and reaped the consequences of their choice. They wrought out their own destiny as any other nation. Yet Moses points out how God kept the promises which He had made to their fathers, and, in spite of their stiff-necked and rebellious disposition, brought them through the “great and terrible wilderness” and behold “ye stand this day, all of you, before the Lord your God; your elders, your captains of your tribes, and your officers, all the men of Israel, your little ones, your wives and thy stranger that

is in thy camp." A nation, complete, and called to a great office and to the hope of a glorious destiny.

#### THE EXHORTATION TO LOYALTY

Since God has verified His promise, made four hundred years before, He has given ground of confidence that He will still lead them on to the full realization of the purpose He announced to Abraham,—that they should be a great nation, and in them all the nations of the earth should be blessed. The argument is the same as that of Paul—Phil. 1:6, "Being confident of this very thing, that He that hath begun a good work in you will finish it."

But this confidence must not blind them to the truth that they are free, and therefore responsible; that on them rests the choice of good or evil.

The most solemn adjuration ever uttered is that recorded in Ch. xxx:15-20, "See, I have set before thee this day life and good, and death and evil, . . . I call heaven and earth to record this day against you that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: Therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live." And the threatenings of Chapter xxviii: are the most terrible description of the consequences of sin. It flashes like the lightning of Mt. Sinai. It reveals the glittering sword of the avenging God. It follows the deadly virus of sin to its utmost and most ultimate effects.

It is not an exaggeration, nor a concession to popular superstition, to attribute the failure of crops or the prevalence of disease to spiritual causes. The judgments here predicted are but the detailed predictions of the effects of sin given in more general terms in Gen. iii:17-19. The agency of secondary causes is not ignored, but the general connection between unrighteousness and physical evil is too obvious to be denied. The order of causation is universal—unfaithfulness to God's law,

social disorder, waste and neglect, disease and famine, oppression and destruction. Such is the brief sad story of many a family and many a nation. "God is not mocked; whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."

The vivid and minute specification of the evils that should follow disobedience was so wonderfully verified by the experience of Israel that it is cited as an argument for the late composition of this book; but it seems rather a remarkable proof of the reign of law. Everywhere and always such penalties, in some form and degree, must follow the forsaking of God's law, and the chain of cause and effect includes the moral world with the physical and social order.

The culmination of this terrible chapter of woes is very striking—v.68, "Ye shall be sold unto your enemies for bond men and bond women, and *no man shall buy you.*" Even the poor boon of slavery should be denied, and they should be cast out as refuse and rubbish to perish from the earth.

Happily the fruits of righteousness are no less certain than the wages of sin. Again and again Moses assures the people that if they choose God's way of life and keep His covenant, He will grant them every good thing. "If ye hearken to these judgments and keep and do them, the Lord thy God shall keep unto thee the covenant which He sware unto thy fathers, and He will love thee and bless thee." Chap. VII:12, 13. "And the Lord hath avouched thee this day to be His peculiar people, as He hath promised thee, and that thou shouldst keep all His commandments; and to make thee high above all nations which He hath made, in praise, and in name, and in honour; and that thou mayest be a holy people unto the Lord thy God as He hath spoken." Ch. XXVI:18, 19.

#### THE SUPREME LAW—HOLINESS

The prime distinction of pure religion is its demand that man shall strive to be holy. "Be ye holy, for I am holy" is the

absolute and unvarying standard set for every man. Moses and the Prophets, Christ and His Apostles, the Law and the Ritual of worship teach, at sundry times and in divers manners this same doctrine that without holiness no man shall see the Lord.

This feature more than any other sets the religion of Jehovah apart from, and above, every other religion of the ancient world. The gods of the heathen world were worshiped and served as the allies of their worshipers, on a strictly business basis. The worshiper gave his sacrifice or service as the price of the favor he sought, and having rendered the service, claimed the favor by right of an implied contract. The question of moral character of the worshiper was not considered to be relevant in the matter. In the revelation given by Moses, the whole concept of worship was totally different. Here character is everything. The aim and purpose of all worship was to restore and perfect in man the image of a holy God. The demands of the law were all summed up in this one great object—to attain to holiness. The ritual, with all its sacrifices and ceremonies, was designed to teach and to promote this object, and the exhortations of the prophets and the disquisitions of philosophers and the visions of poets and seers, all were directed to this end: That the people might be taught and exercised in holiness. It is a religion of character, not of ceremony. Its purpose is salvation from sin and not release from punishment.

This fundamental doctrine is no where so clearly taught nor so intensely emphasized as in these great discourses. It is preached and repeated and proclaimed and illustrated as though Moses foresaw—as he doubtless did—that this was just the point, the vital point, which the people were likely to forget and forsake. It is but the old Mosaic doctrine that the great Isaiah preached so fervently. “To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the Lord.” “When ye

make many prayers I will not hear; your hands are full of blood. Wash you, make you clean, put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes: Cease to do evil: learn to do well: seek judgment: righten the oppressed; judge the fatherless, plead for the widow." No ritual, however useful as a means of grace; no ceremonies, however sacred or divinely ordered, can ever be anything more than means to this end—mere instruments for the accomplishment of this great purpose,—namely the attainment of a clean heart and a right spirit.

#### LOVE THE FULFILLING OF THE LAW

Conduct has in itself little moral quality. It is not what we do, but why we do it, that makes it good or bad. "Out of the heart are the issues of life." The affections are the source of all our deeds. To love the right things is the essence of righteousness. There is no more profound philosophy than that which crieth, "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord: And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart and with all thy soul and with all thy might." This our Lord, with His unerring wisdom, designated as "the first and great commandment." The unity of God implies the harmony of all the universe, and makes plain the absolute necessity of having our whole soul, mind, and might in accord with Him.

The decalogue is the definition of a righteous life. As such it must ever be the rule of conduct, but love for God is the only source from which the springs of perfect conduct flow. Without it such obedience as we render is a poor and slavish service, which has little relish of salvation in it, and soon breaks down to mere perfunctory and empty forms.

It is to be observed that this first and great commandment is complete, it covers the whole ground of duty; for the second, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself," is "like unto it";

that is, it is the same in principle—a corollary implied in the first.

#### THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

The ten commandments—as we have already noticed, formed the core of the ritual of worship ordained by Moses at Mt. Sinai. The whole tabernacle service was arranged to throw the emphasis of its dramatic teaching on the righteous life defined in these commandments.

But this was not the only use of this wonderful code of law. It was the foundation of the social order, the standard of moral integrity, the fundamental basis of all legislation.

The political and social life of Israel was so intimately blended with their religion that they cannot be separated. We cannot conceive rightly of either without considering all. Their religion had right conduct for its aim. Their legislation was framed for moral purposes; to establish justice and promote mercy was the constant and consistent end of all their statutes and ordinances.

The Ten Commandments were given as the revelation of eternal principles which are embodied in the Constitution of the World. They are permanent as the law of gravitation is permanent, true as rules of arithmetic are true, because the world is made that way. They are absolute, unconditioned, eternal, because they define relations that are fixed in the order of the universe, and they state truths which are from the beginning.

Thou shalt have no other gods, for there is none other. To regard God as sole, sovereign and supreme is the only way to conceive of the universe as it is. To suppose that there are other gods is false and misleading; just as to suppose that two and two are five. It is misapprehending the fact; it gives a false notion of the order of the world, and puts man in wrong relations to everything.

The unity and sovereignty of God is the most fundamental of all truths, and the basis of all intelligent conception of the world in which we live. And the great law of duty is very properly prefaced with this declaration, "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one God."

The second commandment is a statement of the truth next in importance. That is that God is a spiritual being: not to be thought of or represented as the likeness of anything in the material world. "God is a Spirit and they that worship Him must worship Him in Spirit." These two commandments define for all time the greatest of all truths,—the sovereignty and spirituality of God.

The third commandment defines the attitude of mind that we should have toward God. The "Name of God" means here, as in all Scripture, the Person, the very Godhead, and "to take in vain" means to treat lightly, irreverently, or profanely the supreme and awful fact that God is God, sovereign, holy, just, and good. It demands of us reverence and devotion, and whatever may be due to the majesty of "Him in whom we live and move and have our being." This commandment may be regarded as a corollary to the first and second, for it follows as the logical consequence of the truths revealed in them. The fourth commandment also follows the same logical order, and provides the means for the exercise and development of that attribute of mind required in the third. It is the great conservator of the moral and religious instincts, and the defense against the sordid worldliness that is destructive of the higher interests of the soul.

It is, in one aspect, the most important of the commandments, because without such provision for our spiritual exercise, all reverence—indeed all thought of spiritual things dies out and leaves us capable of nothing but the "things of the earth, earthy."

The fifth commandment stands first of the six that have

to do with the relations of men to one another. It has to do with what is manifestly the most fundamental of all social obligations. The relation of child and parent is the closest of all natural ties. It binds the family together so that it is the real unit of the community and state. To preserve the honor and perform the duties of this relation is the obvious requisite of social order and individual excellence, and the promise of long life and prosperity to such as keep this commandment is sanctioned by the very constitution of mankind.

The sixth, seventh, eighth, and ninth commandments deal with the purely human relations, and their demands are so evidently necessary to the peace and welfare of the race, that all nations have recognized them, and, more or less perfectly, defined them in their laws and customs and social institutions. Their place in the Decalogue gives them a peculiar force and sanctity by grounding them on our relation to God and duty to Him. They are thus lifted from the ordinary plane of mere convenience and utility to the dignity and obligation of religious duties. They are binding, not because of expediency, but because of the eternal constitution of the universe—an expression of the will of God.

This fundamental character of the commandments is most clearly shown in the tenth, which goes below all outward acts, and deals with the ultimate source and springs of conduct. "Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies." It is therefore the evil thought, the inordinate desires and affections that are to be guarded against, and cast out of our lives.

It may be said that most of these commandments may be found in other codes that make no claim to inspiration, and that this Decalogue is nothing more than the convenient summary of duties known and demanded by the common sense of mankind. To this it may be answered that it is only partly true. The more obvious relations of man to man suggest, and



indeed make necessary, some such laws as these against murder, theft, and adultery; and such laws are found in every code. But nowhere else do we find anything approaching the Decalogue in the *purity* and *completeness* of its definition of a righteous life. Its superior excellence lies, not in the originality of the several laws, but in the work as a whole. Nowhere else do we find anything to compare with the Decalogue in the wisdom with which everything local or temporary or ceremonial is avoided, and everything essential, permanent, and fundamental included. Moreover it is unique in its conception of the ground and obligation on which the commandments rest. They are put forth as the duties which our nature and the eternal order of the universe demand. They do not create new obligations, but reveal and publish that which God made "in the beginning." They rest not on any conception of "social contract" or "adaptation to environment" or "greatest good to the greatest number" but solely and absolutely on the immutable character of Him who made the heavens and the earth.

#### STATUTES, ORDINANCES, AND JUDGMENTS

The moral principles defined in the Ten Commandments are permanent and unchangeable. They are grounded in the order of the whole creation. They date from "the beginning" and are "perfect."

But the application of these eternal principles to all the varied activities and the changing circumstances of our life is a task of greatest magnitude. "To do justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with thy God" is the whole of moral obligation; but to define justice in terms of specific rules of conduct requires great wisdom and care. The purpose of the statutes and ordinances and judgments is to specify, so far as possible, the duties that these principles demand. To define the claims of justice, mercy, and reverence in all the varied cir-

cumstances of our earthly life is the work of legislation—a most essential office in any state of organized society.

In their very nature all such statutes and ordinances are subject to change; the deeds which may be just and merciful in certain circumstances may be quite unjust or harsh when the circumstances change. “New occasions teach new duties, Time makes ancient good uncouth, They must upward still and onward Who would keep abreast of truth.” There is, moreover, a certain element of compromise necessitated by the fact that all men are sinners. The statutes are but the means and instruments by which the warped and crippled souls of men are brought to such conformity to health and soundness as they be able to attain.

We are not surprised to find that in the statutes many things are *recognized* and *regulated* which should have been abolished. But Moses was too wise a legislator to attempt impossible reforms—to make laws which could not be enforced. With him a half loaf was preferable to no bread.

So “for the hardness of their hearts” Moses regulated divorce, and slavery, and revenge, and other evils which he could not eradicate. The statutes of divorce were a great deal better than the prevalent customs of the times. “An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth” is far short of ideal morality, but a great improvement upon the unlimited revenge which anger craves. And the statute upon slavery did very much to ameliorate an evil condition which could not be wholly abolished.

It was necessary to demand by law somewhat less than perfection, in order to enforce any law at all. So we find that Moses aimed to improve what he could not perfect; to restrain what he could not abolish; and to approximate what he could not achieve.

It should also be noticed that the statutes and ordinances and judgments were not a *code* of laws in the strict modern sense of that word. They were more like precepts, or maxims

of law; they were general rather than universal; they are something between the eternal principles stated in the Decalogue, and the laws to be enforced by specific penalties. They are educational rather than prescriptive. For example, "Thou shalt rise up before the hoary head, and honor the face of the old man"; or, "If there be with thee a poor man, one of thy brethren, within any of thy gates, thou shalt not harden thy heart nor shut thine hand from thy poor brother." Such directions abound all through the book, and form a most important part of this revelation, but they cannot be regarded as laws in our sense of the word. They are definitions of character rather than of conduct. They may be thought of as the negative form of the same principles that Jesus taught in the Beatitudes. For instance, "Thou shalt not oppress an hired servant that is poor and needy. At his day shalt thou give him his hire, neither shall the sun go down upon it: for he is poor and setteth his heart upon it: lest he cry against thee unto the Lord and it be sin upon thee." Compare, "Blessed are the merciful; for they shall obtain mercy."

Rightly understood, these statutes are, on the whole, the finest code of conduct ever framed. The spirit of tender sympathy; the spirit of fair play, and courteous treatment, and the sweet reasonableness of it all is beyond all praise. Even in the execution of the law, in the extremity of corporal punishment, there is scrupulous regard for the inalienable rights of the offender's feelings—e. g. "If there be a controversy between men, and they come unto judgment, and the judges judge them: then they shall justify the righteous and condemn the wicked: and it shall be that if the wicked man be worthy to be beaten, that the judge shall cause him to lie down and to be beaten before his face. Forty stripes he may give him but he shall not exceed, lest if he should exceed and beat him above these, with many stripes, then thy brother should seem vile unto thee."

The whole of this section—Ch. XII:1 to XXVI:19—will repay most careful study. It is not a formal code of laws, and the unsystematic order of its contents is significant of its character. It is not intended to be scientific, but practical. It deals with life and conduct, not with a system of jurisprudence. "It is a lamp to our feet, a light to our path." It has the tone of friendly counsel rather than the imperative voice of the law; the kindly admonition of a father, rather than the severe writs of the court.

The following subjects may be taken as exercises in the study of this section.

The treatment of the poor. Ch. XV:1-18, XXIV:6, 10-25; 19-22.

The care of widows and orphans. XXIV:17.

On neighborliness. Ch. XXII:1-4; XXIII:24-25.

Of strangers. XXIII:3-8, 15-16, 19-20; XXIV:17-18.

Honesty. XIX:14; XXV:13-16.

Truthfulness. XIX:15-21.

Modesty and decency. XXII:5, 13-30; XXII:1-4; XXV:5-12.

Obedience to Parents. XXI:18-21.

False religion. XII:1-4, 29-32; XVII:2-7; XIII:1-18.

The most distinguished feature of this code—if we may call it a code—is the ground and reason upon which it is based, that is, the sovereign will of a loving God. The practical advantage of right conduct to promote happiness, its tendency to bring life and prosperity is not ignored; but the ultimate ground of duty is our relation to God. He is the supreme and rightful Lord of all, and his will is commended to us by His love and care. The relation of God to us is *personal*. He appeals to us on the generous ground of his manifested interest, and his zeal for our highest good. "I am the Lord thy God which brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage" is the fitting preface to all his commandments. "O that there were such a heart in them that they would fear

me and keep all my commandments always, that it might be well with them and their children forever," is the tender plea by which He commends the law to our affection and respect.

#### THE THANKSGIVING RITUAL

The order of worship, so minutely detailed in Ch. xxvi, is very rich in suggestions as to the spirit of all true worship. It is primarily a ritual of thanksgiving—the form prescribed for the worship of God by an offering, a beautiful and dignified ceremony for the direction of the individual worshiper. It is one of the few forms of worship that are distinctly personal. The priest has no part in it except to receive the gift and set it down before the altar. Then the worshiper makes his confession, expresses his thanks, and formally offers his gift and worship in the simple but beautiful formula beginning with "A Syrian ready to perish was my father" and ending "And the Lord hath brought us into this place, and hath given us this land, a land that floweth with milk and honey. And now, behold, I have brought the first fruits of the land which Thou, O Lord, hast given me." Ch. xxvi:5-10.

The whole service, in action and in words, is a model of propriety, of good taste, and of devotion that has never been surpassed in all the ritual of any age. The gladness of the spirit that suffuses it is extended in the closing verse of its direction, "And thou shalt rejoice in every good thing which the Lord thy God hath given unto thee, and unto thine house, thou, and the Levite, and the stranger that is among you."

This ritual of thanksgiving was concluded, or supplemented, by a prayer of purgation—a declaration of his stewardship—which every man was to make at the end of every third year. When the fruits of his fields were gathered and all his tithes and offerings paid, then he is directed to say before the Lord his God. "I have put away the hallowed things"—the things

belonging to God—"out of my house, and also have given them unto the Levite and unto the stranger, and to the fatherless, and to the widow according to all thy commandment which thou has commanded me: I have not transgressed thy commandments, neither have I forgotten them." Then he is to offer this prayer. "Look down from thy holy habitation, from heaven, and bless thy people Israel, and the ground which Thou hast given us, as Thou swarest to our fathers, a land flowing with milk and honey."

And on this follows the blessing, "Thou hast avouched the Lord this day to be thy God, and that thou shouldest walk in his ways and keep his statutes, and his commandments, and his judgments, and hearken unto his voice: And the Lord hath avouched thee this day to be a peculiar people unto Himself, as He hath promised thee, and that thou shouldest keep all his commandments: to make thee high above all nations which He hath made, for a praise, and for a name, and for an honor; and that thou mayest be an holy people unto the Lord thy God, as he hath spoken."

The mutual dependence of the nation upon the individual and the individual upon the nation is wonderfully well revealed in all these ordinances. The promises are all, like the promise made to Abraham, personal, national, and universal. The ritual of worship is largely national, conducted by an ordained priesthood for and in behalf of all Israel, wherever they may be scattered abroad through all the earth: nevertheless the individual was taught to stand in an immediate relation to God, to commune with Him in his own right, to confess his sins, and to give thanks for himself, without the intervention or mediation of any one whatsoever. The dignity and solemn ceremony of their public worship as conducted at the tabernacle was not allowed to displace the more intimate devotions of the individual, nor was the vicarious service of the official priesthood allowed for one moment to be substituted for the personal

sacrifice of a clean heart and a right spirit.

"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God" is the motif of all worship, and love is absolutely and exclusively a personal act.

#### THE PRIESTS

In the social order established by Moses when the Priest Nation was organized at Mt. Sinai, very definite provision was made for the religious training of the people. Not only were the ordinances of worship prescribed, and an elaborate ritual provided, but a permanent arrangement was made to provide a priesthood who should have charge of everything pertaining to their religious instruction and worship.

The whole tribe of Levi was segregated from the people and assigned to this office. In the distribution of the land which the nation was to possess, this tribe was to have no share. Approximately one-twelfth part would properly fall to them, and, since they were excluded, it was but fair that some equitable system should secure to them a just share in the fruits and income of the land.

It is not necessary for the present purpose that we inquire very closely into the regulations that were made for their support. It must suffice to notice that an elaborate system of tithes and offerings was ordained, by which both their religious service and the ministering priests were maintained.

By this arrangement the priests were freed from worldly cares and avocations, and enabled to devote their time and energies exclusively to the duties of their office. We cannot imagine a scheme that would be more effective to secure the permanence of their religious instruction and their worship.

In order that the service which they ministered might be regarded with the respect and reverence due to its importance, those who ministered it were set apart and consecrated with impressive ceremonies. Great care was exercised to emphasize

the dignity and sacredness of the office, that the solemn services of worship might not be undertaken lightly nor unadvisedly, but soberly, discreetly, and in the fear of God. The ritual for the consecration and ordination of Aaron and his sons, as given in Ex. XXVIII and XXIX, is one of the most elaborate and impressive in all religious history. Much of it is symbolic of religious truth; all of it is effective to express the dignity and sacredness of the office.

In Deuteronomy the distribution of the various functions of the priestly offices seems to be taken for granted, as already familiar; but we find them charged not only with the strictly religious duties, such as the conduct of worship, but also with some judicial functions and public instruction, both in things religious and in the laws and ordinances.

Just what portion of the tribe of Levi was charged with the strictly priestly functions, by what system it was determined just who should hold the office of priest, and what distinction was made between priests and Levites is not clearly stated. It seems probable that much of such detail was left to the convenience and necessity of their changing circumstances. But the essential features of the priestly office were unchanged from the time of Moses to the time of Christ. This office was the most essential feature of their social and religious order; and, while the priests often failed to honor their office, and often shared the general decline in loyalty to God, they have, on the whole, a record of faithful service that is greatly to their credit. The penalty that one incurs is always in proportion to the degree of dignity and responsibility of his position. It is right and proper that the criticism and denunciation of the inspired prophets and of our Lord should be specially severe against the priests. "For the priests' lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth; for he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts."

The defection of the priests was therefore not only a per-



sonal fault, but the betrayal of an official trust—malfeasance of office. “Like priest like people” is the proverbial statement of a law of social development that is not sufficiently recognized.

The office of prophet was largely that of criticism, of innovation and reform, while that of the priest was conservative and educational. The former is always more interesting, but the latter is, in the long run, more important.

This contrast of the prophetic and priestly offices is admirably stated by Dr. Andrew Harper. “The modern tendency in Old Testament study is to depreciate the priest and to exalt the prophet, just as in ecclesiastical life we tend to make much of those who are, or who give themselves out to be, religious reformers and thinkers, and to make little of the ordinary parish ministry. But the good done by the latter is, and must be, for each individual generation more than that done by the former. No one can estimate too highly the conserving and elevating effect of a faithful, high-minded minister. Often without genius either intellectual or religious, without much speculative power, with so firm a hold of the old truth, which has been their own guiding star, that they cannot readily see the good in anything new, such men, when faithful to the light they have, are the stable, restful, immediately effective element in all church life. . . . The priests and Levites were the entirely indispensable element in the religious life of the nation. They gave the daily bread of religion to the people. They embodied the principles which came to them from prophetic inspiration in ceremonies and institutions; they treasured up whatever had been gained, and kept the people nurtured in it and admonished by it.”

#### THE PUBLICATION OF THE LAW

The Statutes and Judgments which are recorded in this book, and taken as the text of its discourses, are not to be thought

of as a code of laws, devised by Moses out of his own heart, and ordained by his authority.

They were, doubtless, for the most part, customs and usages that had sprung up at various times, and were already well established in the life of the people. Some of them, no doubt, had originated during their sojourn in the wilderness, called forth by the circumstances of that time; but most of them were probably very ancient, and had been preserved by tradition from before the time of Abraham, and observed, so far as circumstances had permitted, through the whole period of their sojourn in Egypt. The work of Moses was chiefly that of revision, of sifting and mending of these ancient laws so that they should express and define the conduct required by the fuller knowledge of God, and the new circumstances into which they were about to come. Laws and social customs are always very conservative. They change by slow degrees, and are the work of evolution rather than revolution.

Moreover, in the earlier stages of a nation's life, laws are much less definite than when the social order has become more fixed and settled. The strict interpretation of the letter of the statute is characteristic of a late stage of society. In the earlier stages more is left to the discretion of the judges, and their aim was faithfulness to the principles rather than strict conformity to the words of a statute.

But it is obviously necessary that the people be informed of the laws they are to observe and obey. They must somehow be published.

As the nation was about to enter the promised land, and settle there, they would of necessity face new conditions and live in very different circumstances from those of their wandering life in the wilderness. It was therefore specially important that the laws adapted to these new conditions should be made familiar. This necessity did not escape the notice of the great law-giver, and he devised the means to meet it. These

means were of four kinds.

1. First, there was to be a great popular meeting to ratify the constitution—the fundamental principles, according to which they were to govern themselves. They are not required to ratify the statutes and ordinances in detail, for these would always be subject to revision as change of conditions should require, but they should bind themselves by a solemn oath to abide forever by the principles of justice and purity and loyalty to God. It is a great dramatic ritual to be observed after they had entered into possession of the promised land, and before they had scattered abroad to their allotted homes. The whole congregation was to gather in the valley of Shechem, where Abraham had pitched his tent under the oaks of Moreh, and had erected his first altar to God in the land which he was to receive as an inheritance after four hundred years. Here they were to divide into two great companies. Six tribes were to ascend Mt. Ebal on the one side of the valley and the other six tribes were to ascend Mt. Gerizim on the other side of the valley. Then the Levites on Mt. Gerizim were to proclaim with a loud voice the terms of blessing which God had promised, and the whole congregation should respond, Amen. Then those upon Mt. Ebal should in like manner proclaim the curses that were ordained against those who should be guilty of the sins specified in the proclamation, and again the people should respond, Amen. It was a most impressive ceremony, and well designed to fix in every heart the dread solemnity of their covenant with God, their King.

These blessings and curses are the text on which Moses bases the discourse of Chapter xxviii. A forceful sermon, which glows with fervent zeal; first setting forth with finest eloquence the blessings which would come to them if they were faithful; then in burning words he pictures the terrible punishments that would surely follow their unfaithfulness. It is the most fearsome picture ever drawn of the consequences that follow

any want of conformity unto, or transgression of the laws of God.

2. The second method of publishing the law was the great stone-and-plaster pillar that they were to erect after they had crossed over Jordan, and on which the law was to be inscribed as a permanent record.

3. Moses also wrote this law and delivered it unto the priests the sons of Levi, which bare the ark of the covenant of the Lord, and unto all the elders of Israel. And Moses commanded them saying, "At the end of every seven years, in the solemnity of the year of release, in the feast of tabernacles, when all Israel is come to appear before the Lord thy God in the place which he shall choose, thou shalt read this law before all Israel in their hearing. Gather the people together, men and women and children and the stranger that is within thy gates, that they may hear, and that they may learn and fear the Lord your God." This was the third means of publishing and perpetrating the knowledge of the law.

4. The fourth and most important means of making known the law was by the constant repetition of it, especially to the children of each generation, and the daily, familiar quotation of it on all occasions. "And these words which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: and thou shalt teach them diligently to thy children, and shall talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down and when thou risest up. And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes. And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house and on thy gates." Ch. vi:6-9.

In connection with this provision for the teaching of the law to the children and associating it with their daily life, Moses gives a solemn warning against the dangers of prosperity. He anticipates the tendency, so strong in all of us, to forget God when we have no present sense of need. He gives this warn-

ing therefore, "When the Lord thy God shall have brought thee into the land which He swore unto thy fathers, to Abraham and to Isaac and to Jacob to give thee, . . . when thou hast eaten and be full, then beware lest thou forget the Lord which brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage."

The strong emphasis put upon the command to make the law familiar to each coming generation is one of the striking features of this book, and is significant of much; one thing may be especially noted, that is the absolute confidence of Moses in the everlasting validity of these laws. He was not afraid to have their sweet reasonableness tested by familiarity and practical experience.

#### THE SONG OF MOSES

Considered merely as a poem this song is one of the great literary masterpieces. It is constructed according to the rules of Hebrew classic poetry, and has in high degree the peculiar appeal to our sense of aesthetic excellence. Each verse contains two clauses which express the same thought in slightly varied forms. This is the peculiar feature of all Hebrew poetry; and, where these parallel expressions are skillfully drawn it is a most effective means of artistic emphasis. The effects produced by this reduplication of each thought are various. Sometimes the thought is merely emphasized by the re-echoing of it in a varied form, as vs. 10.

"He compassed him about, He cared for Him;  
He kept him as the apple of his eye."

Sometimes the second line expands or expounds the first, as vs. 18.

"Of the Rock that begat thee thou hast been unmindful;  
Thou hast forgotten God that gave thee birth."

Or again, the second line completes or supplements the thought of the first, as vs. 19.

“And the Lord saw it, and abhorred them,  
Because of the provocation of His sons and his daughters.”

Of the peculiar character of Hebrew poetry we hope to speak more fully elsewhere. Here we are concerned rather with the matter than the form.

The song as a whole is a condensed and poetic summary of the great thoughts expressed in the discourses which compose the book. No new thought is introduced, and none of prime importance is omitted. It stands in relation to the whole book as the final movement of an elaborate symphony stands to the musical composition. It gathers up the motifs and the various threads of harmony and weaves them into a miniature presentment of the whole.

It opens with a bold exordium, calling upon heaven and earth to hear.

“Give ear ye heavens and I will speak,  
And let the earth hear the words of my mouth.”

Thus claiming for his subject a high and catholic interest.

“My doctrine shall drop as the rain,  
My speech shall distil as the dew,  
As the small rain upon the tender grass  
And as showers upon the herb.”

Thus he states his purpose, to refresh and vivify the hearer. Then the theme is introduced.

“For I will proclaim the name of the Lord,”  
“A God of faithfulness and without iniquity,  
Just and right is He.”

But it is not to be an abstract eulogy, but a most practical and searching sermon, teaching what we are to believe concerning God and what duty God requires of us.

In the elaboration of this theme he follows the method of the whole book. First he reviews their history, and on the basis of God's goodness, appeals to Israel to respond with loving obedience. He chides them for their ingratitude, their waywardness, and their disloyalty, warns them of the direful penalties that righteous judgment will inflict, and closes with the comforting assurance of God's gracious purpose for Israel and all the world.

The development of this theme, the goodness of God, very naturally, calls forth the highest and sweetest strains of his song.

“As an eagle that stirreth up her nest,  
That fluttereth over her young,  
He spread abroad his wings; He took them,  
He bare them on his pinions;  
The Lord alone did lead him,  
And there was no strange God with him,  
He made him to ride on the high places of the earth,  
And he did eat the increase of the fields:  
And He made him to suck honey out of the rock,  
And oil out of the flinty rock.”

So he reviews the glorious works of God on their behalf. Then suddenly turns to picture the shameful failure of Israel to show themselves worthy of such kindness, contrasting their beast-like stupidity and frowardness with God's gracious love.

“Jeshurun waxed fat and kicked”

“Then he forsook the God that made him.”

The righteous indignation, the threat of casting them off as they deserve, a fearsome picture of the evils that their sins deserve, the relenting of his righteous judgment and the renewal of his tender mercy; all this is pictured with the finest poetic art, and made impressive by its appeal to their own knowledge of the facts and to the judgment of their conscience.

The closing verses are an appeal to Israel—to their reason and their better sense, their conscience and their aspirations.

“Oh! that they were wise, that they understood this,  
That they would consider their latter end!”

“See now that I, even I, am He,  
And there is no God with Me  
I kill and I make alive,  
I have wounded and I heal,  
And there is none that can deliver out of my hand,  
For I lift up my hand to heaven,  
And say, As I live forever.”

The everlasting covenant, the promise that cannot be broken, the seal of the rainbow, the oath of Jehovah are the ground of hope. These are appealed to as the basis of confidence that “the eternal God is our refuge and underneath are the everlasting arms.” And so the last strain of the song is the glad note of victory, of victory that should bring gladness to the whole wide world, fulfilling the promise which He spake to Abraham and to his seed, that in them should all nations of the world be blessed.

“Rejoice, O ye nations, with his people,  
For He will avenge the blood of his servants  
And will render vengeance to his adversaries,  
And will make expiation for his land, for his people.”

Many centuries after Moses wrote these words—dolorous



and difficult ages, for the most part—Zacharias, filled with the Holy Ghost, prophesied in celebration of a further revelation of this everlasting gospel, but his words are very like an immediate response to this sweet song of hope, in the words

“Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel,  
For He hath visited and wrought redemption for his people,  
And hath raised up a horn of salvation for us,  
In the house of his servant David  
(As he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets  
Which have been since the world began.)  
Salvation from our enemies, and from the hand of all that  
hate us  
To show mercy toward our fathers,  
And to remember His holy covenant;  
The oath which He sware unto Abraham our father,  
To grant that we, being delivered out of the hand of our  
enemies,  
Should serve Him without fear,  
In holiness and righteousness before Him all our days.”

## CHAPTER IX

### THE RITUAL OF THE TABERNACLE

#### A DRAMATIC GOSPEL

*"Now even the first covenant, had ordinances of divine service and its sanctuary."*

THE giving of the Ten Commandments was the great event of the assembly of the Priest Nation at Mt. Sinai, for these commandments are the foundation of all righteousness. They are the magnetic needle by which we find the true meridian and lay our course of life. They are as unchanging as the pole star. They publish truth that had its origin in that beginning when God made the heavens and the earth and which shall endure till the earth shall perish, and the heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll, and as a wornout garment folded up and put away.

But God deals very bountifully with us. He gives not grudgingly the meagre index of the way of life, but by "precept upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little and there a little" He teaches us the order of approach to holiness, and provides the means of grace.

Upon the Ten Commandments He framed the order of worship and the statutes of civil and social life.

The attainment of moral perfection is the purpose of all religious service. The ritual of worship is the means to this end. In order that we may be brought to holiness we must somehow be taught and exercised in righteousness. The goal is far away but the path is at our feet. We must begin just where we are, and step by step pursue the way to that state of harmony

with God's all perfect will, till we shall be, in habit, state, and act, conformed to his image and made complete.

Such is the underlying purpose of all religious service. It is all *a means of grace*. It is instruction and discipline: a spiritual training, by which every thought is brought into subjection to the obedience of God.

The order of worship that God ordained for Israel was given with the Ten Commandments, and most intimately connected with that covenant, though carefully distinguished from it. The Commandments, as we have seen, are the definition of a righteous life; the order of worship was the means by which such life could be attained to. In the nature of the case the definition never changes. It is the end and aim of life. But the means may change, for they must be adapted not only to the end in view, but also to the state and circumstances of the soul that seeks the end; as one may make his journey to some distant country now by means unknown in earlier times.

Yet as the aim of all religious service is the same, we shall surely find the same essential principles involved; and one divinely ordered service will be a revelation of eternal elements that must be present in all true and acceptable worship.

The ritual of worship as ordained at Sinai is so rich in religious truth and occupies so large a place in the history of our redemption that we should take pains to understand it and to catch its spirit. Its profound significance is indicated by care with which each detail is prescribed, and by the solemn injunction "see that ye make all things according to the pattern showed thee in the mount."

Its worth and excellence is not to be measured by its artistic beauty, but it is significant that so great care is taken that everything pertaining to the service shall body forth, in precious metal, costly stones, and skillful craftsmanship, the dignity and value of the sacred offices which these vessels and vestments were to serve.

In the sacred ceremonies also there was the same punctilious attention to details, that the dignity and solemnity of worship might not be diminished, nor made common by the vulgarity of him who ministered. Nothing was indifferent, but everything, from the precious gems of the high priest's breast-plate to the tongs and snuff dishes of the candlestick, from the embroidery of the curtains to the silver sockets of the boards of the tabernacle, were minutely prescribed: and every movement of the officiating priest most carefully ordained. Aside from the obvious purpose of preserving the awe and deep solemnity which is most meet in our approach to God's majestic presence, there was need that all this ritual should be precise, and scrupulously observed for it was a great scheme of education. Every part of it was a revelation in symbolic acts of the essential truths of all religion. *It was a great drama*, setting forth in vivid imagery the whole course of the soul's progress from sin to holiness. Its simplicity was suited to the undeveloped state of the people for whom it was ordained; and its solemn meaning appealed to the religious sense that is given to all men, and its profound revelation of the way to holiness makes it of great permanent value to all ages.

Now notice that in this dramatic ritual the central feature is the Ten Commandments. On these and around them the whole scheme is ordered and arranged. "Thou shalt make an ark"—so the pattern showed in the mount begins—"Thou shalt make an ark of acacia wood . . . and thou shalt overlay it with pure gold . . . and thou shalt put into the ark the testimony which I shall give thee."

"And thou shalt make a mercy seat of pure gold . . . and thou shalt put the mercy seat above the ark, and there will I meet with thee, and I will commune with thee from above the mercy seat."

The only meeting place of God with man is on the basis of a righteous life. To "commune" with Him man must be free

from transgression. "He that hath clean hands and a pure heart," and he only, may stand in his holy place.

This ark of the testimony with the mercy seat resting on it is then placed in the inner sanctuary, shrouded in mystery, secluded with the veil which none but the high priest might ever penetrate, and he but once a year.

Thus the supreme and sacred importance of holy living was set forth with an impressive emphasis, and the first great principle of religious truth was taught: "Without holiness no man can see God."

In the outer sanctuary were three articles of furniture, each one significant of one essential means of grace,—one step in the progress toward a righteous life; the altar of incense, signifying prayer; the candlestick, standing for enlightenment or religious culture; and the table of show bread, the symbol of good works. These together represent the means of grace, by which in all ages man may cultivate his spiritual and moral powers and approach the ideal state of harmony with God and communion with Him.

Outside the tabernacle, but within the court, were placed the laver, where the priests performed their ceremonial washing as they ministered at the altar and in the tabernacle, and the brazen altar on which the sacrifices were offered.

Such was the order of the plan or pattern of the tabernacle as given of God to Moses.

Thus it was constructed and arranged as the stage set for the sacred drama, in which the essential order of salvation was exhibited.

The drama was enacted thus: the sinner brings his offering to the altar, lays his hands upon its head and confesses his sins, thus signifying that his guilt is transferred to the victim, which thus becomes his substitute, his representative. The victim then is slain, and burned upon the altar, thus taking the sinner's place and making *atonement* for his sins, and also signifying

the *consecration* of the worshiper. In his representative he gives himself to God.

Then the ministering priest washes his hands and feet at the laver as the symbol of *repentance*—the desire to be clean from sin.

Then came the means of grace, “works meet for repentance,” the show-bread, the obvious symbol of work; then spiritual culture, or enlightenment, as the lighted candles signify; and prayer, the incense from our hearts.

These three means of grace are grouped together in the sanctuary; they go together; neither is complete without the other, altogether they promote our progress toward perfection of character and conduct.

Thus the fundamentals of religious knowledge were taught in the five acts of this drama: briefly stated they were these,—

First Act—Sacrifice, signifying atonement.

Second—Washing, signifying Repentance.

Third—The show-bread,—good works.

Fourth—The Candles,—spiritual culture.

Fifth—Incense, signifying Prayer.

Brief and simple as it is, it is complete and perfect. As an outline map may be as perfect in its way as one that shows a thousand details, so this outline of religious truth needs no amendment or correction to bring it into harmony with the fullest revelation of the later ages. We have not outgrown these truths. The teaching of Prophets and Apostles and the sublime revelation given us in the life and words of Jesus Christ have deepened our understanding and heightened our appreciation of all these truths, but not one jot or tittle of this law has passed away or ever shall.

This is the path by which each soul must pass from sin and misery to holiness and communion with God.

Our religion is always a religion of Character, its sole purpose is to restore us to spiritual health, called Holiness, and to

right conduct, called Righteousness; that we may, in state and act and habit, be brought into harmony and fellowship with God and the universe which he created. A holy character and righteous life is the end, the goal, of all religious service, and we reach this goal by the means of grace as indicated by these symbols and this dramatic revelation.

The divine order of a righteous life,—the Commandments, is the first thing in the order of importance; the first spoken of in the *pattern*, but it is the last thing reached in the action of sacred drama. So in our actual experience we come to holiness not by our own righteousness, but we come to righteousness and holiness by various stages, of which the first is the *atonement*, the sacrifice by which the guilt of sin is purged away, and we are *justified*; then with an *honest desire* to be clean of sin, and an *earnest purpose* to strive for righteousness; we *bring forth fruits* meet for repentance, and *enlighten* our minds in the knowledge of God, and seek to bring our souls into *harmony with God by prayer*; we grow in grace, and are transformed more and more into the image of God.

The Ten Commandments and the Order of Worship for the Tabernacle were the two chief revelations given at Sinai. Other regulations instituted there, and the exposition of the principles of the religious truth which underlies all life and conduct are more conveniently considered as they are presented in the book of Deuteronomy.

## CHAPTER X

### THE HEBREW PROPHETS

*"Men spake from God, being moved by the Holy Ghost."*

THE ritual ordained for the church of Israel has never been surpassed for beauty, dignity or depth of meaning.

For some fifteen centuries it held its place as the best revelation of spiritual truth that the world had yet received. From the day when Moses consecrated the sons of Levi and set them apart for the sacred office, to that day when the virgin mother brought the seemly offerings of two young doves in celebration of the birth of her son Jesus—through all the marvelous vicissitudes of that peculiar people, this ritual was kept with scrupulous care, and exercised an influence on the nation, and on the world, that cannot be estimated.

Nevertheless this ritual had the "defects of its qualities." It had the limitations of all ritualistic systems. It presented truth in material forms, in bodily exercises which in themselves had no power to affect the character. There was danger that the worshipers should fail to look beyond the symbols to the truth they represented, and so come to regard these services as *constituting* their religion, and thus satisfy their conscience by the observance of these forms.

This danger was not unforeseen; it was anticipated and provided against. From the first this dramatic gospel was supplemented by oral instruction, by precepts and exposition and exhortation.

This great body of religious teaching is called by the general name of prophecy, and the familiar phrase, "the law and the



prophets" means the ritual and the admonitions and instruction which was given for the nurture and edification of the church.

The first, and in many respects the greatest of the prophets, was Moses; and the book of Deuteronomy the greatest of the prophetic books; for that book is practically a volume of sermons, in which Moses expounds the principles of spiritual truth, and exhorts the people to obedience. Whether we have in Deuteronomy the verbatim words of Moses or the revision of some later hand is not important, if we have substantially the teaching of the great prophet.

As time rolls on "new occasions teach new duties," and "at sundry times and in divers manners God spake to the fathers by the prophets;" and as each new revelation stood upon the shoulders of the past, there grew up gradually a system of theology, that in majesty and truth stands as high above all mere philosophy as the stars above the mountain tops.

The office of the Hebrew prophet was the most notable feature of the ancient church. The priesthood of Israel, all the way from Aaron down to Caiaphas, was much like the priesthood of any other nation. Their office was routine, almost mechanical; all that was required of them was the faithful celebration of a formal service.

But the prophets had a very different office, one that required talents of the highest order and character of finest quality. They were rightly called *seers*. It was given them to apprehend the truth not seen by common men, to look behind the actual and to perceive the principles of truth; to look beyond the present and forecast the future and to anticipate the destiny of the church and state.

That they might perform this office they were given a place of greatest freedom. They formed no part of the organized church, no laying on of hands, nor the anointing with sacred oil conferred on them the authority of church or state. They

were not bound by ritual nor hampered by tradition nor subject to the dictates of the church or state in the exercise of their high office.

They were God's special messengers. His envoys extraordinary, appointed by the Holy Ghost and responsible to God alone. They had the utmost freedom, but the most solemn responsibility. Their duty was to speak for God, to deliver his message as he gave it to them to deliver.

It is remarkable that an office so inconvenient to priestcraft, so intolerable to tyranny, should not have been suppressed, but while the individual prophets were very often persecuted, the right to prophesy was never called in question.

They were just what the word prophet denotes, they were *spokesmen* "men who spoke as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."

We are not however, to suppose that they were mere heralds uttering words put in their mouths,—not mere amanuenses writing words miraculously whispered in their ears. God never deals thus with men, never uses them as mere machines, but as rational and moral beings. What he would reveal through men he leads men to apprehend. When he would have a spokesman he makes him first a seer. No true prophet uttered any message from Jehovah but what was to him an intellectual conviction, something believed and held as sacred truth. How the spirit of God so wrought upon his mind, how supernatural influence blended with the natural exercise of reason and emotion we leave for psychology to explain; we are concerned now only with the facts of history—the fact that these men did see and know, they believed and rejoiced in truth above the reach of common men and beyond the horizon of the clearest reason, and *these things came to pass*.

It is also to be borne in mind that, while the prophets often uttered prediction of future events, and the word prophecy has come to mean chiefly this foretelling of the future, this was by

no means their only function. They were the messengers of God to make known his will, and the great bulk of their deliverances were concerned with present duty, with eternal principles of truth; and the prediction of events forms but a small part of their deliverances.

It would be hard to overestimate the value of the Hebrew prophets' work; not only to Israel but to the world; not merely to the past but to all the ages.

They exerted an influence on their own times and generations that was far greater than that of their kings; and in their books they have moulded the religious thoughts of three thousand years. In these books we have I suppose but the merest fragments of their teaching; yet we have here such a treasury of spiritual truth, such a gallery of beautiful ideals as could not be duplicated from all the literature of the world today.

The purpose of all prophecy is the same, that is to reveal the will of God for our salvation from sin to holiness, but the methods of delivering this revelation were of great variety. Each author chooses the weapon suited to his hand, the style he finds effective to his purpose. This variety proves what we have said, that his function was never the mere utterance of words, but the delivery of a message that was in fullest sense his very own. It is of interest also to notice that the prophets were called from every rank and from various callings. The foster son of an Egyptian princess, learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, gives us the great orations of the book of Deuteronomy, and Amos, the cowboy of Tekoa, in crude and homely phrases, delivers his immortal invectives against the greed and cruelty and sensuality of his time, and indeed of all time.

These give us the range of the prophetic calling. It was not the prerogative of any class, but the gift bestowed on any one who could employ it.

## THE PROPHETIC BOOKS

We have already noticed the place and purpose of the prophetic office. Let us consider now the special occasions and historic setting of their messages.

The Patriarchs and Moses were indeed great prophets, none did more to reveal God's will, and that is the very essence of prophecy. But they were so conspicuous in other functions that we rarely think of them as prophets. We apply the title rather to those whose work was more exclusively to teach.

There were many such teachers, and the scope and character of their ministry was varied by their circumstances and the demands and fashions of their times. In the rude times of the judges, they seem to have been little more than shrewd and practical advisers of the people, credited with some degree of supernatural insight.

Later, they seem to have risen to the more dignified position of regular instructors, especially in morals; and still higher they attained, as the recognized authority not only in morals but in religion and statesmanship.

They were consulted on difficult questions not only for their powers of divination, but for their trained and intelligent judgment.

It was in these two capacities that they first came into prominence, and for these two services they were distinguished throughout the five centuries from Elijah to Malachi—II Kings VIII:7-15; II Chron. XVIII:9-27. Even in the days of David it was not considered unusual or out of place for the prophet, Nathan, to rebuke the king, to judge him and pronounce a terrible sentence upon him in the Name of God.

*Elijah and Elisha.* The earliest of the prophets however whose words and deeds are largely noticed in sacred history was Elijah.

Of all the heroes of Israel none is so remarkable as the prophet

Elijah. He stands prominent for many reasons, but challenges attention chiefly by two incidents of unique and astonishing character, his miraculous translation from earth in the chariot of fire, and his appearance with Moses at the transfiguration of our Lord nine centuries later. These are mysteries which we cannot penetrate, but the facts themselves give us a glimpse and suggestion of worlds so near, and yet so utterly unknown to us, that we are awestruck and amazed.

We are so accustomed to have all things accounted for, explained in terms of science, and neatly classified and filed in the categories of philosophy, that we are shocked by the sudden flash of light on a field that we believe exists, but which we are accustomed to ignore, that is the realm of departed spirits. We hope—nay we are confident, that life is not limited and bounded by the grave. Death is, after all, only an incident of our *lives*. It is only an event in the course of our existence, —a very serious event indeed, but only that; we are convinced of this, yet when, for a moment, the veil is drawn aside and we have a glimpse of what we had accepted on faith, we are disturbed and to a large degree incredulous. The translation of Elijah, and his appearance on a great occasion of our Lord's earthly ministry, is quite outside of all other human history; yet is not incongruous, not out of harmony with anything we know. It is transcendent, supernatural—as we know nature—but not unnatural; and withal, it is in the most perfect accord with the whole course of revelation, and thoroughly consistent with the truth we have from all other sources.

Much the same may be said of the miracles recorded of both Elijah and Elisha. However we may strive to account for everything by the orderly operation of forces according to usual method—which is all that the laws of nature ever means—; however we may refuse to believe all that transcends such operation, we have only pushed the mystery one step further back.

There is nothing more marvelous about coming to life a second time than about coming to life the first time; nothing in itself more wonderful in fire falling from heaven in answer to prayer, than in its falling as the lightning falls according to nature's ordinary rule or law.

The whole question of the credibility of the miracles of these prophets is one of *evidence*. We have heard the voices of our friends at the telephone a thousand miles away; we have looked through the flesh of our hand and seen the bones; we have sent messages through the empty air three thousand miles away. Why should we say that miracles are incredible? We need not suppose them to be in any way inconsistent with the laws of nature; we are not to assume that they violate in the least degree the order of the world with which we are acquainted; we need not be concerned to understand them—do you understand the telephone? All we want is credible evidence that these things were really done.

These stories of miracles come to us with all the presumptions of truth, and with the cumulative evidence of a consistent and harmonious course of history, which, in the main, is beyond all doubt or question.

The remarkable feature of these miraculous deeds is their ordinary and practical purpose. The miracles wrought by Elijah are all attributed to his prayers. "He prayed earnestly that it might not rain, and it rained not on the land for three years and six months." On Mt. Carmel he repaired the sacred altar and sacrificed according to the ritual of his time, and then he prayed, saying "Lord God of Abraham, Isaac and of Israel let it be known this day that thou art God in Israel . . . Hear me O Lord, hear me that this people may know that thou art the Lord God." Then the fire of God fell and consumed the burnt sacrifice and the wood and licked up the water that was in the trench.

The miracles were the prophets' credentials, the evidence of

their divine commission. When we consider the vast stretch of time covered by the sacred narrative, the miracles there recorded are of extremely rare occurrence; and when considered in connection with their occasions, purposes and circumstances, will be found to be perfect harmony with the whole course and plan of revelation—one of the “divers manners” in which God spake to the fathers.

The great mission of Elijah and of Elisha was to warn and to protest against the moral corruption and the spiritual degeneration of their times. They were the earnest voice of a loving God striving with his rebellious children to save them from self-destruction.

Their messages were for the most part given in actions rather than in words, and for this reason, they seem more marvellous, more incredible than messages in words, but they were not really so. We should rather say that the lofty visions and transcendent insight of Hosea, who was but a little later than Elisha, seem to involve a higher kind of inspiration, a more divine afflatus than the wonder-working gift of Elijah or Elisha.

These two prophets were so much alike in their spirit and their methods, in their times and circumstances that we have considered them together. But in many respects they were very different.

Elijah seems to have been somewhat of a hermit, dwelling apart from social life and the activities of his time, remote and different from ordinary men; yet we are assured that he was only “a man, subject to like passions as we are.”

Elisha was more like other men, more fully associated with the life of the community, and though by no means an ordinary man, he was not so far removed from the common experience and circumstances of his people.

He was but a young man, when Elijah called him from his farm to share with him the hardships and the honor of the prophetic office.

It is hard for us to realize that such a call demanded the very highest grade of heroism. The task of turning Israel back from ruin seemed utterly hopeless. Prudence would urge that it was a useless sacrifice. To give up his wealth—for he was wealthy by the standards of his time—to throw away his opportunities, to renounce his prospects, to join this forlorn hope would seem to most men quite too much to ask. But Elisha took the higher view. He did not even hesitate. He took two yoke of his oxen and made a feast to celebrate his call, and straightway went with Elijah to be his servant and disciple.

There is something very fine in the willing consecration of a young man to any great cause of public benefit. It is not very difficult to enlist under the enthusiasm of popular applause, to make great sacrifices in the moment of excited zeal; but to choose the right simply because it is right, to leave all—or, indeed, to leave anything of value, to follow the call to serve our fellow men is the real heroism.

Such was Elisha's enlistment in the cause of Israel—the cause of the uplift of his people. It was neither a popular nor promising cause, but in it he won the noble title which his own prophetic appreciation had given Elijah fifty years before “The chariot of Israel and the horseman thereof”; for such men are indeed the strength and defense of their nation. This is one of the distinct and brilliant revelations that has come to the world by the Hebrew prophets that the strength and glory of a nation are its loyalty to truth and righteousness, and he who most promotes these is indeed the chariot and the horseman of his time.

#### THE THEMES OF PROPHECY

The subjects of prophetic discourse were chiefly moral; and the great majority of their deliverances were just such exhor-



tations to godliness and virtue as constitute the staple of such sermons and orations as the good and great of every nation and of every time have offered to their hearers.

The only remarkable feature of these admonitions was their high and consistent tone.

Though the prophets whose writings are preserved to us lived at widely separated times, stretching over more than a thousand years, and though the circumstances of the people to whom they spoke differed as widely as human circumstances could differ, and though the prophets themselves were from every rank or society, and of various degrees of culture, education and personal temperament, yet they all teach the same doctrine; they all present the same ideal, and they all uphold the selfsame standard of righteousness. From the splendid orations of Moses, to the poetic visions of Zachariah we have the same moral code expounded, and the very identical conception of righteousness and life.

The unity of the sacred scriptures—the oneness of their ultimate source and authorship,—could not be more conclusively demonstrated than by this remarkable fact, that, through the books that compose our Bible from Genesis to Malachi, there is not one jarring note. The “sweet singer of Israel,” the rugged seer of Mt. Carmel and the sublime Isaiah chant the various parts of the same majestic anthem, “Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord of Hosts.” “Ye shall therefore be holy for I am holy.”

But while the bulk of prophecy is thus devoted to teaching of morality and the admonition to godly living, there is another element of greater value and of higher quality. Above the fervid tones of moral exhortation, is ever heard the sweeter notes of the gospel; the glad tidings of a mighty salvation provided from heaven; the glorious vision of a messiah; a Saviour mighty to save, who should come in God’s own good time to take upon his omnipotent shoulder the burden of a broken

law, and save from going down to the pit.

It is this hope and confidence, this trustful expectation, this glorious faith that puts these prophecies above all disquisitions of philosophers and all the exhortations of moralists since the world began.

This gospel is never separated from the stern demand for righteousness; but it is distinct from that demand.

Holiness is still the goal, righteousness is ever the duty required of man; but to reach this goal, to perform this duty, man is to have the help of God, the champion who should appear on our behalf and crush the serpent's head. This was the distinctive feature of these messages which justifies the habit of regarding prophecy as being, most essentially, prediction. It *was* prediction. Its point of view was in the future; it saw not only the world that lay about the speaker, but the world that was to be; and we get the prophet's point of view, not by conceiving of him as foretelling this or that *event*, but rather as projecting his soul to that future, viewing the world as from that point of vantage.

But while the prophets' horizon was thus extended, and their visions clarified that they might reveal the will of God, there is no such thing in prophecy as "speaking at large;" uttering truth which was for the future and not for the present.

They spoke always to the *occasion*. They strove for a *verdict*. They demanded righteous *conduct*.

But while their aim was always practical, such applications of truth to present duty did not exhaust the truth.

Truth is universal and eternal. The principles of righteousness which they expounded as the basis of their plea for better living were everlasting principles, as true today as when the prophets first perceived them; and their applications are as varied as the times and circumstances of the human race. Therefore there is a sense in which they spoke more wisely than they

knew. Truth has applications and implications that are inexhaustible.

“Flower in the crannied wall  
I pluck you out of the crannies  
I hold you here, root and all, in my hand  
Little flower. But if I could understand  
What you are, root and all, and all in all,  
I should know what God and Man is.”

#### MESSIANIC PROPHECIES

All teachings of the prophets which refer to the coming Savior are called Messianic Prophecy.

These prophecies are sometimes definite predictions of specific events connected with his coming, as “But thou Bethlehem in the land of Judah art not the least among the princes of Judah; for out of thee shall come a governor who shall rule my people Israel.” Micah v:2, or the whole of Isaiah LIII, and many other passages in the various books of prophecy.

But far more significant, and, on the whole, more illuminating, is the general attitude of mind which all the prophets hold toward the destiny of Israel as the Priest Nation of the world; the agent of the world’s redemption.

They constantly assume that the golden age lies in the future; and that God’s word was pledged to send a Savior for the world.

Zacharias voiced the hope of all the prophets when he sang the Benedictus “Blessed be the Lord God of Israel for he hath visited and redeemed his people.

And hath raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of David

As he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets since the world began.”

And good old Simeon rightly called the new born babe of Bethlehem

“A light to lighten the Gentiles  
And the glory of thy people Israel.”

These two ideas permeate the whole of Hebrew prophecy. A Savior was to come to redeem the world; and Israel was the chosen people of whom this Savior should come.

Israel was therefore in a special sense the servant of Jehovah. This was their national calling, and their glory among the nations.

The *revelation* of this truth was progressive, but the substance of it was the same from the beginning; and the clearer revelation of the later prophets does not in the least degree discredit the more vague and shadowy teaching of the earlier seers. As an outline map of the U. S. which shows no more than the boundary lines may be as accurate as the great chart which gives all the physical features and the location of each town and village; so the conception of Messiah's coming revealed in the Garden of Eden, or to Noah, Abraham or Moses is in perfect accord with the exquisite details of Isaiah's more advanced and brilliant visions. The prophets saw as through a glass darkly but they *saw*; and the limitation of their vision does not diminish the certainty of what they saw. As the little child discerns the phases of the moon, or notes the constancy of the pole star, and has no occasion to revise his observation however much he may later learn of the causes which lie back of what he sees in childhood, so the early visions were of things eternal and immutable.

A few of the outstanding features of the prophetic vision were common to them all; and these are of such importance that we should note them well. The first of these is the conception of a *universal kingdom* over which the coming king

should reign.

*Catholicity* has been the watchword of the church from the beginning.

"In thee and in thy seed shall the nations of the earth be blessed."

"He shall have dominion from sea to sea and from the river to the ends of the earth. They that dwell in the wilderness shall bow before him and his enemies shall lick the dust.

The kings of Tarshish and of the Isles shall bring presents

The kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts

Yea all kings shall fall down before him

All nations shall serve him."

"For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulders; and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and of peace there shall be no end." These are but examples of a host of passages which predict the universal sway of the annointed one whom God would in his own good time send forth to save.

Such predictions are the more remarkable in view of the fact that Israel at its best was but a petty nation, and for the greater part of its long history an insignificant factor in the political world. Nor does this conception of a universal kingdom seem ever to have been a political conception. The prophets taught, what Jesus himself confessed, "My kingdom is not of this world." His reign is over the hearts of men. "Righteousness is the girdle of his loins and faithfulness the girdle of his reins." His strength is the eternal force of truth and right; and by this power shall every *thought* be brought into subjection to his will. His kingdom shall extend not only to each man, but to the whole soul of every man. Not only "every knee shall bow", but "every tongue shall confess him Lord."

The second great feature of the prophetic concept of the

coming Savior is his *gentleness*, his tender pity, his great deep compassion for the world in all its sin and misery. This feature is most attractively portrayed in the poetic vision of Isaiah. "He shall not cry, nor lift up nor cause his voice to be heard in the street. A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench;" "He shall be a light to the Gentiles, to open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon and them that sit in darkness and of the prison house." "He shall lead his flock like a shepherd; he shall gather the lambs in his arms and carry them in his bosom."

But this thought is not peculiar to Isaiah. It is common to them all. Jacob called him the "Shiloh" or peaceful one. Malachi prefigured him as the "Sun of Righteousness" who should arise with healing in his wings, and Micah describes his reign in those glorious lines, "But in the last days it shall come to pass that the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be established in the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills; and the people shall flow into it. And many nations shall come and say, come let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths; for the law shall go forth out of Zion and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.

And he shall judge among many people, and rebuke many nations afar off; and they shall beat their swords into plough shares and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up a sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. But they shall sit every man under his own vine and under his fig tree, and none shall make them afraid; for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it."

But the most remarkable of all the revelations concerning the Messiah is the prediction of his *humiliation* and *suffering*. The prophecy in Eden foretold the "seed of the woman who should bruise the serpent's head." No figure could more clearly

signify a victorious champion; one of our own nature—a “very man,” who should overcome the power of evil. But no less clearly does it predict his suffering. The serpent should “wound his heel.”

All through the pages of prophecy this truth is kept in prominence.

The great words on this subject are the familiar verses of Isaiah 53rd chapter where, in language of unsurpassed tenderness and beauty, he tells the awful story of the humiliation suffering and death of the Messiah—the servant of Jehovah. Familiar as they are we cannot forbear to quote them.

“Who hath believed our report”—i. e. the thing that we heard—? It was not new but it was so wonderful that it was incredible to men. “My servant shall be exalted and extolled and be very high” yet this exalted one shall be abased, despised, rejected and had in contempt, “a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief;” one from whom men would turn away their faces in aversion. Then that marvelous, pathetic, sublime and awful elegy.

“Surely he hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows.”

“He was wounded for our transgressions.”

“He was bruised for our iniquities.

“The chastisement of our peace was upon him and with his stripes we are healed.”

“He was oppressed, yet he humbled himself.”

“For the transgressions of my people was he stricken.”

“Although he had done no violence neither was any deceit in his mouth yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him.”

“He bear the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressor.”

## CHAPTER XI

### ISAIAH

**T**HE book that bears Isaiah's name is one of the few books that may be called majestic.

It has the elements of grandeur, dignity and stateliness rarely found in such perfection, and, I think, nowhere else so well combined with the gentler grace of poetic beauty.

The grandeur of the thoughts, the dignity of its style and the splendor of its imagery do not destroy, but rather enhance the sweet and kindly fervor of its sentiments. It is a book to be loved as well as admired. It speaks as a friend to a friend, as well as a prophet of God to men.

Whether the book is the work of one author or two or more, is of slight importance, save to critics. If the leading violinist in the orchestra chose to change his instrument once, or often, during a concert, we find no fault, if the instruments are good and in tune with those of the other players. If this great singer who gave us the first thirty-nine chapters of this book be not the same as he who uttered the remaining chapters, very well; so be it. There is no fault in the harmony, they are well in tune, the *motif* is sustained and we feel confident that the music is by the same great composer—that it is God's message.

All that we have said of prophecy in general is eminently true of all the contents of this book. It speaks with an authority that finds the conscience, and awakens responsive echoes in what we feel to be our best and noblest consciousness.

No other critic is so unsparing in denunciation of men's folly and wickedness; no one so persistent in goading us on and up, out of our sin and our sloth and our weakness. He turns the



keen edge of his satire upon the pleasant lies we are so fond of telling ourselves. He scorns our pretended devotions, and our bargaining worship.

“To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me saith the Lord; I am full of the burnt offering of rams and the fat of fed beasts. When ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hand to tread my courts?

Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies. I cannot away with it; it is iniquity even the solemn meeting.” Thus, and with much more of the same stern, indignant protest against the insincerity and empty formalism of his time, he scourges the people he loved. Then, almost in the same breath, he pleads with them in the tones of gracious invitation.

“I will not hear you for your hands are full of blood. Wash you, make you clean, put away the evil of your doing from before mine eyes; cease from evil; learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow. Come now, let us reason together, saith the Lord; though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though they be like crimson, they shall be as wool.”

These verses may be taken as a fair example of Isaiah's preaching; for preaching it is, eloquent and persuasive preaching, unsparing in criticism of their faults, but tender in pleading for reform and in the offer of pardon and peace.

Much of the book is of this character; but the bright vision of redemption and of a golden age to come is ever the ground of his hope, and the chief incentive offered for nobler living. This vision reaches its culmination in the splendid passages of chapters IX and XI e. g. “For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulders; and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace.

Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David and upon his kingdom to order it and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even forever. The zeal of the Lord of Hosts will perform this." Chapter ix:6-7.

The familiar verses of the eleventh chapter beginning, "There shall come forth a shoot out the stem of Jesse; and a branch shall grow out of his roots," is second only to those just quoted, and together they give us the loftiest conception of the hopes of Israel, but the same glorious expectation gives color and brightness to almost every page of the book.

A large part of the book is occupied with these two themes—the call to nobler living, and the sweet hopes of a redeemed and purified nation which should draw to itself, by its own inherent beauty the good and great of all the nations.

The various "burdens" respecting the neighboring nations are very much like the sermons delivered to his own countrymen. Through them all sings the gospel call.

"Let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our Lord, for he will abundantly pardon."

But these calls to repentance and reform are not mere exhortations to better morals. They are very much more than this, they constantly remind the people that they can never of themselves recover their lost estate, or cleanse themselves from sin. No prophet, nor apostle, ever preached so boldly the absolute sovereignty of God or the depravity of man.

His theory of salvation was as simple as it was great. The favor of God granted on the condition of repentance was the very essence of it all. It was evangelical to the last degree.

The weight of argument seems to favor the view that the latter part of the book—chapters XL-LXV were not by the same author as the first, but I confess it is very hard to feel that

the 52d chapter for example, was not sung by the same great voice that sang the first six chapters. If it is another, it is wonderfully tuned to unison both of style and sentiment. And the second part seems to develop from the first, and to complete it, in such symmetrical and perfect proportions, that it cannot be separated without great loss of artistic beauty and logical force.

We cannot now follow out in detail the various contents of the book, nor is it at all our purpose to attempt a commentary on it. Our purpose must be limited to the mere outline of the history of the redemption.

Much that we have said of prophecy in general is illustrated and exemplified particularly in this book; but there is one doctrine of the very first importance that appears distinctly for the first time in the latter chapters of Isaiah. It may be designated as the doctrine of the "*Suffering Servant*."

The idea that the world's salvation should be accomplished *not without conflict*; and the wounds of battle, was distinctly implied in the very first announcement of the gospel. The protevangelium of the garden of Eden promised that the seed of the woman shall crush the serpent's head, but the serpent shall "wound his heel."

This prediction has been indeed abundantly fulfilled in the conflict waged in all the ages between the powers of darkness and the children of light—"That great fight, by truth and freedom ever waged with wrong"—but nothing more specific than this seems to have been conceived of till Isaiah's day.

But the conception of Israel as the priest of the world leads to the thought that, since salvation is to come by suffering, the servant of God, by whom this salvation is to be mediated to the world, must of necessity be a suffering servant—must serve his office by suffering—and, as the priest of the world, standing as the world's peculiar representative must *vicariously* suffer. Then, as the thought evolves in the nature of its own

logical content, the national office is summed up and assumed by an individual.

Hence we have those wonderful chapters which unveil the sublimest heights of the divine plan of redemption. Beginning like the overture to some great oratorio, sounding the essential theme or motif, striking the deep clear chords that shall later be wrought out in varied harmony, so the prophet chants the very heart of this wondrous anthem, saying "Behold my servant whom I uphold, mine elect in whom my soul delighteth I have put my spirit upon him; he shall bring forth judgment to the nations." Chap. XLII:1.

These words are generally taken as referring to the Messiah, and they certainly do refer to him, as he distinctly claimed, Luke IV:16-21; that they also refer to Israel is clearly shown by the verses following, Chap XLII:19 and Chap. XLIV, where the words are addressed to Israel by name "Yet hear now, O Jacob my servant; and Israel whom I have chosen."

But the prophet seems to have in mind the distinction which St. Paul made when he said "For they are not all Israel that are of Israel," and the servant of Jehovah is the true Israel; that is, those who are faithful to the office appointed for Israel. The rest are accounted as aliens and cut off from their citizenship by their own apostasy. We are familiar with the distinction between the true church, and the organized society which we call the church. This seems to explain the prophet's meaning of Israel the servant of God. The nation as a whole contained those who were "blind and deaf;" yet within that nation were the faithful seed, the precious remnant, who preserved through all the ages the continuity of their spiritual life, and kept the lamp of faith unquenched.

Much the same kind of relation seems to be supposed between this essential Israel and the personal Messiah, who should be in fullest sense that which the true Israel was in a more general and historic sense—the Servant of Jehovah.

The Christian church has never for a moment doubted that the wonderful words of Isaiah LII:13—LIII:12 refer to Jesus of Nazareth, but this does not exclude the possibility of their referring also to Israel, so far as they share in the office of the redeemer of the world; for, as our Lord says, "Salvation is of the Jews." Nor is it necessary to suppose that the prophet himself distinguished, as we can now do, between the work of the priest nation, and the great High Priest. As one may say the church of Ireland evangelized the Germans; or that Boniface was the man who brought to them the gospel.

Then we must remember that prophecy is neither history nor dogmatic theology, but much more like poetry; seeing truth in bulk, portraying it in masses, caring little for perspective or chronology; laboring only to impress the hearers with eternal verities, and the gracious purpose of God.

Isaiah is preeminently the gospel prophet. None other saw so clearly, nor so vividly predicts, the glorious hopes of a great salvation. But his immediate purpose is always practical. He strives for the verdict in favor of his cause—the cause of righteousness and loyalty to truth and the duties that were divinely appointed for them to do. When "the fullness of the time was come" and the long silence of four hundred years is broken by the Benedictus of Zacharias it is "the atmosphere of Isaiah" that we find. The faithful remnant were looking for the "consolation of Israel." In the words of Dr. George Adam Smith, "As we enter the Gospel History from the Old Testament we feel at once that Isaiah is in the air. In this fair opening of the new year of the Lord, the harbinger notes of this book awakens about us on all sides, like the voices of birds come back with the spring."

In Mary's song; in Simeon's prayer; in John the Baptist's preaching, in his proclamation of the Lamb of God that beareth the sins of the world, and in the words applied to John, "The voice of one crying in the wilderness," it is Isaiah that is

quoted and Isaiah's concept of the Messianic kingdom that is in mind.

The glory of a workman is his work, and, judged by the influence exerted on the church in all the ages since his time, Isaiah stands among the prophets as Saul among his fellows, "from his shoulders upward he was higher than any of the people."

## CHAPTER XII

### JEREMIAH

**T**HE Book of Jeremiah is remarkable for its intense and tender pathos.

When we turn from the bright and blessed hopes of rapt Isaiah's splendid visions to the mournful dirges of his great successor, we seem to pass out of the genial sunshine into the chill and somber shadows of a darkened world.

"Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people!" might be written on the title page as the motto of this book.

It was a sad lot that fell to Jeremiah, when he was called to chant the doom song of his nation; doubly sad because he was by native disposition tender and sympathetic, one to whom the office of rebuke and reprimand was uncongenial. It was, perhaps, for this very reason that God called him to this unwelcome task; that the severity of the messages he had to give might be somewhat mollified by the gracious spirit of the messenger.

The long ministry of Jeremiah—not less than fifty years—covered the most unhappy years of Jewish history. It was a period in which the long, persistent disobedience to God's commandments was bearing its fruit of misery and national disaster. The inevitable doom, of which they had been warned so often, was hastening to its fulfillment.

The ancient proverb, "Whom the gods will to destroy, they first make mad," was never more clearly exemplified. The kings of Judah from the days of young Josiah were both weak and wicked, and almost invariably took the wrong turn at

every crisis, and in the times of greatest peril failed to recognize the way of safety.

The reforms, which were so strongly instituted under king Josiah, did not succeed in leading back the people to sincere devotion to God or love of righteousness, and, at Josiah's death, the tide of wickedness and folly swelled again and never ebbed.

The entangling alliance with the king of Egypt hampered the freedom of their political life; the evil counsel of false prophets blinded their eyes, and the greed and pride and godlessness of the people destroyed the foundations of their social order, so that Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, provoked by their insolence and folly, had really no choice but to wipe the nation off the map, and carry the people into captivity.

It was in the reign of good Josiah that Jeremiah received his call to prophecy.

The call, recorded in 1:4-10 is remarkable in the breadth of its commission.

"Behold, I have put my words in thy mouth. See, I have this day set thee over the *nations and over the kingdoms*, to pluck up and to break down and to destroy and to overthrow; to build and to plant."

It was a time of storm and stress, a time of plucking up and breaking down, a time of destruction and of overthrow, a time when new things were planted and new foundations laid.

The ancient nations, Egypt and Assyria, Philistia and Tyre, and other less known powers, such as the kings of the land of Uz and Dedan and Teman and Buz, the kings of Elam and the kings of the Medes, were thrown together into the melting pot of Babylonian supremacy, and the old order changed, giving place to new.

It was for such a time that Jeremiah came to his office, as the spokesman of the God of Hosts. It was not without profound significance that the promise was given that God would



make him an "iron pillar and brazen walls, against the whole land, against the kings of Judah, against the princes thereof, against the priests thereof and against the people of the land, and they shall fight against thee; but they shall not prevail against thee: for I am with thee, saith the Lord, to deliver thee."

An iron pillar and brazen walls well symbolize the character of Jeremiah, stanch, inflexible, and much-enduring, he stood unflinching against the opposition of the nation and its rulers, and, amid the tumult of the times, and above the strife of tongues, he lifted his unwavering voice proclaiming the eternal verities of righteousness and the word which the Lord had spoken.

The special message which Jeremiah had to deliver to his own people was the doom of the nation, the righteous judgment which God was about to execute on Judah and Jerusalem.

The purpose of God to chastise his people is the substance of the first revelation made to the prophet. "Moreover the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Jeremiah, what seest thou? And I said, a rod of an almond tree."

A rod, indeed, lifted oftentimes before in warning, now about to fall in punishment and correction.

This vision of the rod gives the leading motif of the whole book, and like the theme of some great oratorio, it is heard at intervals, and dominates the entire composition. e. g. "I will correct thee with judgment and will in no wise leave thee unpunished." xxx:11. "Behold, I will bring evil on this place, the which whosoever heareth, his ears shall tingle." xix:3. "I will cause them to know, this once will I cause them to know mine hand and my might; and they shall know that my name is Jehovah." xvl:21.

Again and again the certainty of God's purpose is affirmed, but it is accompanied by the offer of pardon on condition of repentance, and the prophet pleads with the people to consider

their ways and return to righteousness.

Again and again, his discourses are framed on the same plan. First, the indictment of the nation, charging them in general with the disobedience to God's commandments and specifically with various crimes and vices. Second, a declaration of God's purpose to punish them with great severity. Third, the hope of grace if they repent and reform. Fourth, an exhortation and encouragement to righteousness.

This is the content of each of the first nineteen chapters—Read, for example, chapters IV and IX.

In these earlier prophecies, the prophet seems to have some hope that the call to repentance may be regarded, and his cry is a cry of distress but not of despair.

"Hear ye, and give ear; be not proud: for the Lord hath spoken.

Give glory to the Lord your God, before He cause darkness, and before your feet stumble upon the dark mountains, and while ye look for light He turn it in the shadow of death, and make it gross darkness." Such is the burden of his entreaty always, even unto the end; but, in his later prophecies, he seems to feel that it is but a forlorn hope, and that the nation is incorrigible.

"Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? Then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil."

From the first, the prophet sees not only the rod of correction impending over the nation, but identifies the rod as the nations to the north.

"The word of the Lord came unto me the second time saying, What seest thou?

And I said, I see a seething caldron; and the face thereof is from the north. Then the Lord said unto me, Out of the north evil shall break forth upon all the inhabitants of the land."

Later, this "evil" was more definitely revealed, and Nebu-

chadnezzar, king of Babylon, named as the "rod" in the hand of God for the chastisement of Judah.

More and more specifically the purpose of God is foreseen, and the destruction of the nation predicted and the carrying away of the people into captivity.

In view of the certainty of this event, the prophet urged upon the king and princes of Judah the policy of submission to Nebuchadnezzar.

This advice was exceedingly offensive to the rulers who were already committed to an alliance with Egypt. It was offensive to the people also, because they were stupidly unwilling to look at the facts, or hear advice that was distasteful to their national pride.

It was this message that brought Jeremiah into such disfavor.

If he had confined his preaching to the denunciation of the prevailing evils of his time, and the need of repentance and reform, he would not have aroused the wrath and resentment of his hearers.

It is always safe to preach the commonplaces of morality, to rebuke sin in general and to urge the obligations of righteousness; but to point out specific sins to be repented of, to rebuke the conduct of those in high position, and to cry against the popular will and the settled prejudices of the people is always a dangerous office.

Moreover, in times of political unrest and public danger the people's nerves are irritated and their resentment easily provoked.

In view of the conditions of the time, it is not strange that Jeremiah's doleful message brought down upon his head the wrath and hatred of the people and their rulers.

They set him in the stocks, to be mocked and derided by the rabble of the streets.—xx:2. They haled him before the court, and threatened him with death; from which indeed he was saved only by the traditional respect for the prophetic of-

fice. XXVI:1-16.

The king, Jehoiakim, was so enraged by the prophecy that Jeremiah had written, that he burned the book, and sought to lay hands on the prophet who escaped by hiding himself. XXXVL:9-26.

He was afterwards arrested and imprisoned in a dungeon, where he sank in the mire and would have perished but for the action of the king Zedekiah, who, though too cowardly to defend the prophet, sent for him secretly to ask his advice. XXXVII:11-21.

Such treatment, added to the distress of mind that he suffered because of the doom he knew to be impending over the people whom he loved, and his utter failure to arouse them to a sense of their danger, drove him almost to despair. He poured out his soul in lamentations; he chants the most heart-rending elegies over the dead hopes of the nation, and bemoans his fate that he was born for such a time, and charged with such a task. XV:10, XX:14.

But through all these distressing experiences he never hesitates or wavers from his duty, but with burning zeal proclaims the word of God in truth and faithfulness, and with tears predicts the terrors of judgment which God had revealed to him concerning Judah and Jerusalem.

There is the ring of heroism in his pathetic complaint that his familiar friends had forsaken him because he could not do other than speak the truth which God had given him to speak.

"If I say I will not make mention of him, nor speak any more in his name, then there is in mine heart, as it were a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I am weary with forbearing, and I cannot contain."

Yet, Jeremiah is not to be thought of as a weak and doleful spirit, finding a mean satisfaction in the visions of defeat that he saw concerning his enemies. He is indeed rather bitter at times, as when he prays for the destruction of the false prophets

and the venal priests who betrayed their sacred trust and spoke lies and deceived the people.

His heat against them was certainly justified by the fact that through their "wordy truckling to the transient hour" they heaped up the load of misery which the people would suffer because they were misled. XXIII:15-32.

But the most important message which Jeremiah had to deliver was a message of hope; his most significant prediction was the promise of deliverance and unending glory.

The downfall of the kingdom, the destruction of Jerusalem and the captivity of the people are foretold in positive terms and terrible clearness; but no less positive are the assurances of ultimate victory of the cause of the world's redemption through the seed of Abraham, the chosen race.

*Chastisement*, not destruction is the purpose of all this predicted suffering.

The vision of the "rod" which he saw at the beginning of his ministry is the symbol of God's purpose throughout. And the dark clouds that he saw so thickly gathering upon the near horizon are to be followed by the bright light of returning sunshine, when the storm is past.

If any one thought is dominant in the whole book, it is *the indestructibility of God's gracious purpose*.

While Jeremiah was in prison, in the darkest hour of the nation's history, he received the clearest instruction of God's purpose to restore the nation and fulfill his covenant promise that in them all the nations should be blessed. The whole of Chapter XXXIII is as sweet and comforting, as gracious and catholic as any revelation ever given to mankind. It is singularly rich in definite and tender promises—"Behold I will bring it healing and cure, and I will cure them: and I will reveal unto them abundance of peace and truth.

"And I will cleanse them from all their impurity, whereby they have sinned against me; I will pardon all their iniquities

whereby they have sinned against me.

"And this city shall be to me for a name of joy, for a praise and for a glory before all the nations of the earth."

"Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will perform that good word which I have spoken concerning the house of Israel and concerning the house of Judah. In those days, and at that time, will I cause a *Branch of righteousness* to grow up unto David: and he shall execute righteousness and judgment in the land. In those days shall Judah be saved and Jerusalem shall dwell safely: and this is the name whereby she shall be called. *The Lord is our righteousness.*"

These and other promises are attested by the impressive oath, "Thus saith the Lord: If ye can break my covenant of the day and my covenant of the night, so that there should not be day and night in their season: then may also my covenant be broken with David my servant that he should not have a son to reign upon his throne; and with the Levites, the priests, my ministers."

Somewhat later in his ministry, he delivered another message, equally specific and no less positive—"But fear thou not, O Jacob my servant, neither be dismayed O Israel; for, lo, I will save thee from afar, and thy seed from the land of their captivity: and Jacob shall return, and shall be quiet and at ease, and none shall make him afraid. Fear not thou, O Jacob my servant, saith the Lord; for I am with thee; for I will make a full end of all the nations whither I have driven thee, but I will not make a full end of thee; but I will correct thee with judgment, and will in no wise leave thee unpunished."

XLVI:25.

These prophecies of "the rod," predicting the fall and rising again of the nation are the most important portion of this great book.

They reveal and emphasize the continuity of God's gracious purpose. They reiterate the teaching of Moses and Isaiah,

that righteousness is the condition of blessing, that the priest nation must be a holy nation.

They set God's unchanging purpose in right relation to man's freedom, and teach the absolute demand of clean hands of those "to whom were committed the oracles of God."

They illustrate the truth that "whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. It is for chastening that ye endure; God dealeth with you as with sons, for what son is there whom his father chasteneth not?"

And they also illustrate the truth that "All chastening seemeth for the present to be not joyous, but grievous."

They point out the cause and source of the nation's distress in their disobedience and moral corruption, and urge repentance as the only door of hope. But when exhortation fails to produce reform, and thus avert the rod of correction, the prophet counsels patience and submission. He advises those who were carried captive to build houses in the land whither they were carried, and to accept their fate without repining and cheer their hearts in the assurance that God would not forget his covenant, but, in due time, would restore them, and permit them to resume their office as the priest of the world, who should mediate salvation for all nations.

Doleful as it is in form and seeming, it is essentially a most comforting and heartening message, and it is right and proper that, from the darkest midnight of the nation's history, the prophet in his prison sings the jubilant song of the day of restoration, saying, "Yet again there shall be heard in this place the voice of joy and the voice of gladness; the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride, the voice of them that say, 'Give thanks to the Lord of Hosts, for the Lord is good, for his mercy endureth forever.'"

As was intimated in the call which Jeremiah received to prophesy, he was commissioned not only to be God's spokesman to Judah and the chosen people, but also to the world at

large. "See, I have set thee over the nations and over the kingdoms."

We find, therefore, in this book, not only the prophecies concerning Judah and Jerusalem, but also some remarkable predictions of the fate of the neighboring nations—burdens, foretelling their doom, remarkable, because they were so highly improbable judged by the standard of human foresight, yet proved by subsequent events to be absolutely accurate.

It is well to notice here the point of view from which Jeremiah, and indeed all Hebrew prophecy looked on the gentile nations.

The purpose of God to redeem the world was the central fact in all these visions, and the office of the seed of Abraham as the agent of that redemption was their immediate concern. But they never doubted that Jehovah was the God of all the earth.

"The earth is Jehovah's and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein" is their unchanging conviction. While the special revelation which God gave to the chosen people sometimes led that people to exaggerated notions of their own importance, made them narrow and uncharitable, the prophets ceased not to proclaim the catholicity of the purpose of divine grace.

Hanani the seer, in the days of Asa, expressed it finely when he said, "For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth to show himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward Him."

Now in the days of Jeremiah the "seething caldron" was about to boil over and to bring destruction not only to Judea but to every one of the surrounding nations.

It was given Jeremiah to see the coming desolation of the entire order of the ancient world. The rising power of the Babylonian Empire under the great king Nebuchadnezzar might very well have suggested the downfall of some of the



smaller nations, but the conquest of Egypt was certainly remote from human probability.—The destruction of that nation, which for thousands of years had stood as the very embodiment of stability and power, seemed entirely incredible. But “the word of the Lord which came to Jeremiah concerning the nations” spoke first of Egypt’s doom, and the terrible words of the prophet have the very roar and shout of battle.

“Order ye the buckler and the shield, and draw near to battles. Harness the horses and get up, ye horsemen, and stand forth with your helmets; furbish the spears, put on coats of mail.”

Such is the vision of the preparation for battle. Then he hears the sound of boasting, “Egypt riseth up like the Nile, whose waters toss themselves like the rivers; and he saith, I will rise up, I will cover the earth, I will destroy the city—Babylon—and the inhabitants thereof.”

Then the prophet seems to cheer them on, “Go up, ye horses; rage, ye chariots; and let the mighty men go forth. Cush and Put, that handle the shield; and the Ludim, that handle and bend the bow. For that day is a day of the Lord of Hosts, a day of vengeance, that he may avenge him of his adversaries, and the sword shall devour and be satiate, and shall drink its fill of their blood.”

But the battle went against Egypt and the prophet chants their doom song.

“O virgin daughter of Egypt, in vain dost thou use many medicines; there is no healing for thee. The nations have heard of thy shame, and the earth is full of thy cry; for the mighty man hath stumbled against the mighty; they are fallen both of them together.” XLVI.

In another prophecy in more specific terms it was revealed “how Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon should come and smite the land of Egypt” and all these things came to pass even as the Lord had spoken.

The "burdens" of Philistia, Moab and Ammon, of Edom, Damascus, Kedar and Hazor and of Elam pronounce the judgment of God against those nations, and predict their early and complete destruction.

Each of these doom songs is a terrible proclamation of justice and judgment and the outpouring of divine retribution.

The long list of nations condemned and sentenced, as it were at one session of the court of heaven, is appalling. These nations, however, were mostly second-class powers, more or less dependent on the fate of Egypt or Babylon.

But most remarkable is the burden which Jeremiah wrote concerning Babylon, and even more terrible is the vision of the ruin of that mighty empire.

"O thou proud one, saith the Lord, the Lord of Hosts; for thy day is come, the time that I will visit thee. And the proud one shall fall, and none shall raise him up."

The fall of Babylon should shock the whole political world.

"At the noise of the taking of Babylon the earth trembleth and the cry is heard among the nations." L:46.

Her destruction was to be utter and final, the proud city should be wiped out and be forgotten. "The wild beasts of the desert with the wolves shall dwell there and the ostriches shall dwell there; and it shall be no more inhabited forever; neither shall it be dwelt in from generation to generation." L:39.

It had been the glory of the nations, but the corrupter of the world.

"Babylon hath been a golden cup in the Lord's hand that made all the earth drunken; the nations have drunk of her wine, therefore the nations are mad. Babylon is suddenly fallen and destroyed." LI:7.

The fall of Babylon was one of the greatest events of the world's history, and the vision of it made a profound impression on the prophet. He repeats the prediction again and

again, and elaborates the features of the event with much detail and strong poetic figures.

"How is the hammer of the whole earth cut asunder and broken; how is Babylon become a desolation among the nations!"

"The Lord hath opened his armory, and hath brought forth the weapons of his indignation, for the Lord, the Lord of Hosts, hath a work to do in the land of the Chaldeans." L:23:25.

"Behold I am against thee, O thou proud one, saith the Lord, the Lord of hosts." L:31.

"O thou that dwellest upon many waters abundant in treasures, thine end is come, the measure of thy covetousness. The Lord of hosts hath sworn by himself, saying, Surely I will fill thee with men as with the canker worm, and they shall lift up a shout against thee." LI:13-14.

"Behold I am against thee, O destroying mountain, saith the Lord, which destroyeth all the earth; and I will stretch out mine hand upon thee, and roll thee down from the rocks, and will make thee a burnt mountain, and they shall not take of thee a stone for a corner, nor a stone for foundations, but thou shalt be desolate forever, saith the Lord." LI:25-26.

"Thus saith the Lord of hosts: The broad walls of Babylon shall be utterly overthrown and her high gates shall be burned with fire." LI:58.

With these and many other words of most intense and terrible import the prophet foretells the destruction of the proud and wicked nation. Then he added a vivid little drama to make his prophecy the more impressive. This is the story of it;

"The word which Jeremiah the prophet commanded Seraiah, when he went with Zedekiah king of Judah to Babylon. Now Zedekiah was chief chamberlain. And Jeremiah wrote in a book all the evil that should come upon Babylon, even all these

words that are written concerning Babylon. And Jeremiah said unto Seraiah, When thou comest to Babylon, then see that thou read all these words, and say, O Lord, thou hast spoken concerning this place to cut it off, that none shall dwell therein, neither man nor beast, but that it shall be desolate forever. And it shall be, when thou hast made an end of reading this book, that thou shalt bind a stone to it, and cast it into the midst of the Euphrates; and thou shalt say, Thus shall Babylon sink and shall not rise again because of the evil that I will bring upon her." LI:59-64.

It may have seemed incredible to the contemporaries of Jeremiah that all these nations against whom he prophesied should be doomed to universal ruin.

It is no wonder that a man charged with the task of predicting so many and so great calamities should have aroused against himself the hostility of the people, and that they regarded him as a misanthrope and well nigh mad. If the feet of him that bringeth good tidings are beautiful, so the face of him that predicts evil is abhorred

But his messages were only too true, for even his forceful words were hardly adequate to picture the sad events.

Much that Jeremiah foretold was fulfilled long after he was gathered to his fathers, but the desolation of those lands whose doom he proclaimed has borne its silent testimony to the truth of his inspired words for more than two thousand years; and to this very day no better picture of the land of Moab or of Babylon can be drawn than these ancient words of prophecy. "Moab shall be a desolation; everyone that goeth by it shall be astonished and shall hiss at the plagues thereof."

"And Babylon shall become heaps, a dwelling place of dragons, and astonishment and a hissing, without inhabitant."

Even so it is today, after twenty-five long centuries that have rolled by since these words were spoken.

So all those ancient kings and empires passed away, and have

had but a shadow of their former glory. Only where the vitalizing energy of some Christian nation has touched their dry bones—as in modern Egypt, has any one of those ancient lands arisen from its ashes, or recovered from its curse.

But we still insist that Jeremiah's book is helpful and encouraging. Though its pages groan with the burdens of woe, and are dark with the terrors of impending doom, it is none the less, a beautiful book; sublime and awful in its poetic imagery, grand in its concepts and majestic in its style, it stands in the first rank of the great books of the world. Its greatness is appreciated only as we study it in detail; as we notice the wealth and fitness of its imagery, the beauty of special passages, the force of its dramatic features, and the aptness of his parables. The whole book is so full of rhetorical excellence that it is impossible to give a fair impression of it by a few quotations, but the following examples may stimulate the interest to further reading:

Some of the prophet's favorite expressions are repeated frequently; e. g. God's deep concern for the welfare of Judah is emphasized by the expression "*rising up early*" to send his prophets to them. This expression is used nine times.

Twice he repeats the complaint, "They have healed the hurt of the daughter of my people lightly, saying, Peace, peace; when there is no peace." Many times he uses the emphatic phrase, "The Lord, the Lord of hosts."

Many of the most familiar texts in current speech are from this book, and all too often used with little thought of their connection. e. g. "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots?" XII:23. "The heart is deceitful above all things, and it is desperately sick." XVII:9.

"Is there no balm in Gilead; is there no physician there? Why then is not health of the daughter of my people recovered?" VIII:22.

"If thou hast run with footmen, and they have wearied thee,

then how canst thou contend with horses?" XII:5.

"It is not in man that walketh to direct his steps." X:23,

"Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might; let not the rich man glory in his riches; but let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the Lord which exercise loving kindness, judgment and righteousness in the earth; for in these things do I delight, saith the Lord." IX:24.

The parables are all dramatic. The most striking of them is perhaps the one already mentioned, where the prophecy against Babylon was cast into the midst of the Euphrates river, with the solemn announcement, "Thus shall Babylon sink and shall not rise again."

But the doom of Egypt was also predicted by the dramatic action of burying certain great stones in the pavement in front of Pharaoh's palace in Tehpanhes, in the presence of the men of Judah, and saying, "Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel; Behold I will send and take Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, my servant, and will set his throne upon these stones that I have hid." XLIII:9.

When Jerusalem was actually besieged by the army of Nebuchadnezzar, and Jeremiah was absolutely certain that it would be taken and destroyed, he bought a farm, and paid cash for it, in the presence of witnesses, who also subscribed the deed of purchase. He then sealed up the deed of purchase in an earthen vessel, that it might be preserved for seventy years, till Judah should return, and the kingdom be reestablished in Jerusalem; thus testifying his assurance that the Lord would restore his people even as he had promised by the mouth of Jeremiah. XXXII.

Thus did Jeremiah accomplish his mission, and fulfilled all the word of the Lord which he commanded him saying, "Thou, therefore, gird up thy loins, and arise, and speak unto them all that I command thee; be not dismayed at them, lest

I dismay thee before them. And they shall fight against thee ; but they shall not prevail against thee ; for I am with thee to deliver thee, saith the Lord."

## CHAPTER XIII

### EZEKIEL

**T**HE prophecies of scripture are for the most part simple, practical and easily understood.

Even when they relate to the most profound and lofty themes, their aim is to present such aspects of the subjects as are needed for our direction in duty, or for our comfort in endurance. Their immediate and conspicuous purpose is to promote good conduct.

But while this is so, it is also true that the prophets' vision often extended far beyond the practical affairs of their own day; and their insight penetrated to the most profound and comprehensive principles of morals and religion. Indeed the most essential difference between the inspired prophet and the ordinary moralist or philosopher is just this profounder insight and more perfect vision of the purpose of God.

They preached righteousness, not from a superficial observation of its fitness and efficiency, but from the inspired conviction of its eternal and immutable place in the very constitution of the world. They predicted the future with a confidence like that of the astronomer who foretells an eclipse, with the same unfaltering trust that the laws of God's great universe will go on unswerving in their course.

Though the prophets were always practical they were never opportunists, never changing their doctrine to meet changing circumstances. They always sought results, and strove for the verdict in favor of their cause, but they were never pragmatists willing to judge the truth of a case by its present success.

They were spokesmen for a sovereign God, and therefore they announced the principles of righteousness as confidently as the



mathematician declares the multiplication table or the binomial theorem.

Their faith was not dependent on their observation, but on their confidence that God knows the end from the beginning and with him is no variableness nor shadow of turning.

Their hopes seem often brightest when things were darkest, for the simple reason that their conviction did not depend at all on *things*, but on the character and promise of him who rules in righteousness.

It is not surprising that men believing thus in the sovereignty of God, and in the unchanging quality of righteousness, should with equal zeal perform two very different offices; exhort the world to holiness, and extol the glory of our sovereign God,—or in the well selected phrase of the Westminster catechism “teach what man is to believe concerning God, and what duty God requires of man.”

It is not strange that we find the common obligation of our daily lives, such as honesty and kindness, commanded and sanctioned, not on the ground of policy or worldly wisdom, but on such tremendous and sublime considerations as the omnipotence and majesty of God.

In none of the prophetic writers does this impressive union of simple duty and profound philosophy appear so often as in the earlier chapters of Ezekiel.

In the vision, of Chap. I:1—III-13, we have what may at first sight seem a confused and unintelligible mass of fanciful poetic imagery. Yet we are confident that it was meant to instruct those to whom it was addressed, and must have been, to them at least, intelligible, and in the main it is not really hard to understand.

When we consider also how carefully he calls attention to the place where he received this vision,—by the river Chebar in the land of the Chaldeans—we have the first hint as to its interpretation,

In recent years we have unearthed from ruins of Chaldean cities many of their works of art. The most familiar of these is the great alabaster image of the winged, human headed, ox-footed lion, the emblem of the nation.

From this and other of their works of art we have learned that the Chaldean artist aimed not at reproducing nature, but sought to express the *qualities* of men and things by depicting objects that were most suggestive of these qualities. The human face expresses intelligence; the eagle's wings suggest swift and lofty action, the ox stands for strength and the lion for mastery and courage. So this winged, human headed, ox-footed lion is easily read as the emblem of a nation whose pride was in their wisdom, swiftness, strength and courage.

It mattered not to them that such an image was unnatural, or even monstrous. It told its story, it bodied forth their thought, it expressed their ideas and so fulfilled its purpose.

When we consider the vision of Ezekiel, *not* to find some picture that shall represent familiar forms of nature, but to discover his message to Israel and to us, its main essential meaning is apparent.

It is a *chapter of philosophy*. It is an answer to the question so prominent in our day as to the origin and evolution of the world. It offers a theory of cosmology that is vast and bold, complete and simple, and wonderfully modern in its form and spirit.

It contemplates the vast and awful forces of the world under four great heads.

1. *The forces of the inanimate world.* The wind, the water and the fire. These are the primal agencies in the world's activities. To these our scientists assign the physical conditions and activities of the material world. By these the mountains rose, valleys formed, and seas and continents divided. By these the soil and climate are prepared. By rain and frost and solar heat the world is rendered fit for life.

2. *Then living creatures* come upon the earth. *Vital forces* take up the task of clothing the naked earth with waving forests, blooming fields and fruitful trees.

Living creatures fill the seas with teeming multitudes, and the earth and air with beasts and birds and creeping things, all busy with their feeding and nesting and mating and the care of their young, filling the earth with the song and the roar and the hum of their buoyant energy. They are a never ceasing torrent of divers and marvelous activity. Each going "straight forward" guided by unerring instinct to their allotted tasks.

3. *Then man* with his inventive soul lays hold upon the forces of the vast and material world and with his "wheels," the complicated mechanism of organized society, sets in motion all the arts and industries and commerce of the world. What an apt and perfect figure is this vivid vision of complicated wheels, animated by the spirit of the living creatures, each performing its own peculiar function—"they turned not when they went"—and they went only when the spirit of the living creature moved them.

4. *But above all this a throne*, beyond the tumult and the clamor and the roar of earth's activities—looming high and crowned with splendor is a seat of sovereignty, the emblem of authority, the source of power. The throne of God omnipotent, immutable, supreme, and on this throne a being comparable to man; a being of intelligence, of purpose, and of affections—for these are the features which distinguish man from the other creatures. And he who sits upon the throne, dwells not in silent majesty, remote, indifferent, inactive, but ruling and loving. *He speaks*. From the throne of sapphire—the rainbow circled throne—down through the crystal firmament the voice comes to the listening ear, and God communes with man, makes known his will, and manifests his love.

Such I take it is the meaning of this vision, such the prophet's concept of the world and its relation to his God,

It seems to me the most impressive picture of the universe that was ever drawn. It sets before us with poetic brilliancy the two great fundamental truths of all philosophy and all theology, namely God's eternal sovereignty and his abundant grace; his transcendent glory and his eternal immanence. He is exalted far above the firmament that is above us. He is glorious beyond conception. His dominion stretches over boundless space and endless time. His creation is of marvelous variety, it is of myriad forms and unlimited activities. This much we cannot doubt, this much is evidenced by all our senses, proclaimed by all the sciences. But far above this is the more important truth, that he who sits enthroned above the universe is neither the blind force of nature, nor an unknown divinity, but in very truth a living and a true God; ruling in righteousness, pitying as a father pitieth his children. Mighty to save.

Of the many lessons we might learn from this ancient vision, we have time to notice only one or two.

As we have already said the prophetic messengers were always practical. They never spoke at large, or uttered abstract truth without immediate application. They never indulged in "art for arts sake." They were God's messengers, and they brought messages for us to heed and to obey.

The message which seems to stand out clearly from this vision is the doctrine of the *immanence* of God.

The complex and intricate activities of nature, which at first sight seem confused and turbulent, are really a well ordered and harmonious system. The immense and awful masses of the material world—the sun and moon and the uncounted multitudes of stars whose bulk and magnitude surpass our powers of imagination—these, and the stupendous forces by which they move and influence one another, are as obedient to law as are the tiny motes that float in the sunlight and are tossed by the breath of our lips. The "reign of law" is the most familiar

phrase of modern science. Nothing is more settled and unquestioned than the fact that all the universe is subject to absolute and unchangeable laws which were imposed on it from the beginning. No particle of matter has either lost or gained a single attribute or quality since it was created. Nature has never been revised—But long before our sciences discovered this, while men still thought of nature as a blind and lawless struggle of conflicting forces, while they conceived of lightning and earthquake and eclipse as convulsions or accidents, the prophet conceived of the universe as the well governed empire of an omnipotent and allwise God; and taught this lesson, that we have not quite fully learned, that, not only the great forces of the material world, but the instinctive actions of the brute creation, and the most lofty enterprises of the human race, all social, political and religious conduct are observed and governed by him.

It is a marvelous thing that this voice which comes from the sapphire throne far up beyond the stars, should speak concerning the behavior of a petty people, a little group of insignificant men in an obscure corner of a third class planet in one of the smaller solar systems of the universe.

It is an impressive thought that he, to whom the nations are as a drop of the bucket or the small dust of the balance, is not limited by his vastness, but is great enough to know the inmost thoughts of every heart, and care for the welfare of the individual human soul.

The other lesson is no less impressive, and it reveals the other side of the divine order of the world. While it is *God's world*, it is none the less *our world*, while it is God that *worketh* in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure: still, the call comes to each individual *soul* to work out his own salvation, and that with fear and trembling, for on him rests the dread responsibility of his own salvation. Not only so, but on the individual rests the responsibility for the condition of the race.

Each has his place and duty. Only as each man is faithful in his place and circumstances, can the world's welfare be advanced.

Now when we contemplate this vision of the prophet we find the most impressive feature of it all is its tremendous energy. Every element of it is active. The storm cloud and the whirlwind and the fire; the living creatures with their wings and hands and feet; the great wheels that went when the living creatures went, and they ran and returned as the appearance and the flash of the lightning. The whole scene is one of swift and fearful action, ceaseless, powerful, brilliant, wonderful.

Is this not the impression that we get from the study of the field of nature, or of human history? Wherever we look, above, below or around us there is the same rushing of impetuous energy. Every creature going straight, as the prophet puts it, straight to its place and purpose, guided by the laws of nature or the instinct of its race; and the noise of their wings is as "the noise of great waters as the voice of the Almighty, as the voice of speech, as the voice of a host." Such is the order and the use of all creation,—to every man his work. Activity is the essential requisite of health and growth and even life. To cease from our activities is to begin to die. This is the principle which Dr. Bushnell finds in the text "When they stood they let down their wings." When we rest upon the things below, we cease to strive for things above. Whether this may properly be drawn from that special verse, it is certainly the teaching of the vision as a whole. When any creature settles down to ease and satisfaction it has ceased to grow and has begun to die. The heart takes no vacation, the nerves and tissues daily waste, and daily they must be rebuilt and replenished.

The mind itself is never idle, but with its plans and purposes, its joys and sorrows, its imaginations and its memories, it is ever occupied and constantly employed.

But the mind has a freedom which the forces of the natural world have not. The mind can turn itself to this or that employment. Its attention may be given to the things it chooses, but it cannot escape this law, that when it stands, it lets down its wings. When we rest upon and find our satisfaction in the things below, we cease to aspire to the things above us. When we rest and are satisfied with the pleasures of the animal nature, such as food and drink and creature comforts, we lose the power and capacity for more refined and human joys. When we rest and are satisfied with beautiful clothing, handsome dwellings, and the trappings and the show of wealth, we lose the power to appreciate the nobler excellence of the well trained mind and cultivated taste, and when we rest and are satisfied with wit, wisdom, art and music, we cease to value moral excellence, and never learn the beauty of holiness. The law is universal; whenever we stop, whenever we stand, we let down our wings.

In whatever we feel that we have attained, and are already perfect, we are letting down our wings, by which alone we can attain to higher excellence and nobler character.

Such I take it, is the *principle* taught in this portion of the prophet's visions.

This conception of God as the sovereign Lord of all the earth, ruler of *all nations*, is the dominant idea in all Ezekiel's prophecies. It is indeed the key that opens the mysteries of all the later Hebrew writings, but in none of these is it so apparent as in Ezekiel's book.

To him, the faithfulness of the Jewish nation is the most important thing in the world, for they were the custodians of the world's salvation.

Because of this office they are indestructible; they are immortal till their work is done. The numerous prophecies of Ezekiel are sermons; all of them contain some phase of the same truth, namely the divine commission of the seed of Abraham to be a blessing to all nations.

In form, his prophecies are all highly dramatic; sometimes they were actually illustrated by symbolic acts, as when he took a tile and portrayed on it the city of Jerusalem, and an iron pan to represent the wall thereof; and then conducted a siege against this miniature city, with mound and camp and battering rams.

"This shall be *a sign* to the house of Israel." Chapter iv: 1:3. Sometimes the action is imagined and depicted; as in the vision of the valley full of dry bones, which came to life at the call of the prophet. XXXVII:1-14.

In some cases it is hard to say whether the action is to be considered actual or parabolic: for example, the incident of cutting off his hair and beard, carefully weighing it out in three parts, one part to be burned with fire, one part to be scattered to the wind, and the third part to be smitten about with a sword, a few hairs saved from destruction were afterward burned; thus signifying the utter destruction of the city of Jerusalem and the old order of the nation.

No other author gives such a rich and varied collection of vivid imagery, dramatic illustrations and symbolic acts, which, for the most part, are simple and easily interpreted; almost as simple and lucid as the parables of Jesus. But in his later prophecies, his visions become much more complex and more difficult to interpret in detail, though the gist and general purport of them all is fairly plain.

In his prophecies against his own people he is unsparing in his criticism; no figures are too strong for his use in depicting their unfaithfulness. They are like a faithless wife, guilty of the grossest vileness; they are like a pitiful foundling, which was saved by the charity of a stranger and requited that charity with basest treachery. They had broken their oath. They were worse than the heathen, for they had sinned against light and special favor. "Neither hath Samaria committed half of thy sins; but thou hast multiplied thine abominations more



than they."

Thus he pours out the burning acid of his remarkable eloquence, till the most seared conscience must have felt the pangs of remorse, for they knew that his charges were true, and that his rebukes were justified. Against his own people the chief indictment was disloyalty to God, religious defection, and idolatry; but this was by no means the only sin charged against them. They were greedy of gain, extortioners, oppressors of the poor and the helpless; they took gifts to shed innocent blood; they were guilty of adultery, incest and all manner of lewdness. All the crimes of the heathen were common among them. So the prophet justified the ways of God, and convicts his nation of fully deserving all that had befallen them.

But these denunciations are uttered, not for the purpose of intensifying their distress, but for the gracious purpose of convincing the people of God's good will. His doctrine is the same as that of his great contemporary, Jeremiah; namely, that their affliction was not for their destruction, but for correction—for discipline; that they might be purified and fitted for their high office and made a blessing to the world.

The burdens which Ezekiel delivered against the neighboring nations are similar to those uttered by Jeremiah and other prophets of about the same time. In all of these the same point of view gives the same vision. They see the nations of the world hastening to their fall. The world is being turned upside down. Nations that had endured for thousands of years are about to sink forever. The end of the old order is near, and a new era is about to dawn. The theme to which they all address themselves is the destiny of the covenant of promise which God had made with their fathers; and of this destiny they have no doubt.

Amid the fall of empires and the death of worlds, the promise of God shall stand, and the scheme of his redemption be unfolded and fulfilled.

In the later chapters, Ezekiel records his vision of this scheme. It seems to be a vision dimly seen, seen as through a glass darkly, but no less certain.

Though the complicated imagery in which it is set forth is not clear to us, and possibly it was not very clear to him; nevertheless, the essence of the matter is not doubtful, and the confidence of the prophet is unshaken, for he knew that he was speaking the word which God gave him to deliver.

## CHAPTER XIV

### THE MINOR PROPHETS

**T**HE prophetic element is distributed through all the books of the Bible. The history and poetry and law have each the forward look, and the everlasting covenant forms the basis of their hopes, the well spring of their aspiration.

From the very beginning of the national life of Israel there was a place for the prophet, a right of free speech and a privilege of criticism and exhortation that is very remarkable.

In the days of Moses when, Eldad and Medad began to prophecy in the camp, and Joshua, jealous for the authority of his great chief, reported the fact to Moses as an unwarranted assumption on their part, the wise law-giver distinctly approved of their zeal, and said, "Envieth thou for my sake? would God that all the Lord's people were prophets, and that God would put his spirit upon them." The liberty of prophesying from that day was never called in question.

And this liberty was very much more than mere freedom of speech. The gift of prophecy was recognized as being a special inspiration of God, a sacred commission to be held in honor, and not to be restricted by any human authority.

The ritual of their worship and the whole structure of their political and social order were conservative, and might easily harden into such rigid forms as to prevent all progress and become a yoke that could not be endured. The need of some provision for development, some channel for further revelation to be given as their changed circumstances and increased knowledge might make them able to bear it, some voice which might speak for God without the consent of any human authority,

was necessary if there was to be any development of their religious life. This provision was made by the institution of the prophetic office.

In the nature of the case, such an office could not be regulated, could not be organized or defined, since its very purpose was to reveal new truth, to see visions of things unseen before, to protest against the outgrown truth, and criticise existing customs, and lead on and up to better things.

We cannot trace the steps by which the office of the prophet was developed into a distinct *profession*; but it was certainly not the outgrowth of a mere humanism. It was not the gradual evolution of a rational system of instruction out of a crude and primitive superstition, dealing with sooth-saying, divination, and witchcraft, as some would have us believe.

Like every other good thing, it was sometimes counterfeited, sometimes degraded and abused; but, from the time of Moses and from the founding of their national institutions, the prophetic function was a most honorable and influential office. Indeed, it was so much a part of the recognized order that it is taken for granted, and its duties and activities are mentioned in the historic books as though perfectly familiar.

Moses had no superior as a prophet. Samuel's place and authority needed no explanation or apology. Nathan speaks to David in tones that presuppose a right of long standing and assured authority.

And from the time of David there can be no question as to their recognition as the *spiritual advisors* of the people and the state.

In the books which we call prophetic, we have examples of their work; but in estimating their influence on the history of Israel, we must remember that we have in these books only a small fragment—mere specimens of their work. The great bulk of their deliverances were oral, and addressed to the specific needs of the time and place, and circumstances of the people

to whom they spoke.

We shall not be far wrong in thinking of the prophets as the *preachers* of their time; and of their messages as sermons, aiming to do just what sermons in all ages try to do; that is, to instruct in religious truth and incite to righteous life; to comfort, to encourage, to exhort, to rebuke, and admonish, and warn.

It was a high office, full of great opportunity and charged with grave responsibility.

From the respect in which the prophet was generally held, and from the high, heroic character of the few that are named in history—e. g. Nathan, Elijah and Elisha—we gather that on the whole they were “a goodly fellowship,” though at some times they degenerated, and as a class became venal and corrupt.

We have some of the words and deeds of the prophets recorded in the historic books; e. g. 1 Kings XIII, and XXII:7-28; but we have no writings of the prophets until about the middle of the eighth century—760 B. C.—when Amos wrote his great little book.

A very few years later—744 B. C. Hosea wrote, and in 742 B. C. Isaiah began his sublime works. And so on, in almost unbroken succession for about four hundred years, the Holy Spirit spake by the mouth of prophets the words of God for our instruction.

These prophetic writings are classified in two groups, on the rather insignificant ground of their length.

Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel are called the Major Prophets, and the others Minor Prophets.

As the minor prophecies are small books they were collected into one roll or volume, and this was known as “The Book of the Twelve Prophets.” These are Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi,

The chronological order of these books is not perfectly known, and the place of some of them is a problem for critics; but for our present purpose there is no reason to depart from the order in which they are arranged in Our English Bible.

Our object shall be to find and appreciate the chief message of each prophet, and to consider just what contribution each of these men made to the great revelation given to us at sundry times and divers manners.

### HOSEA

The prophecy of Hosea is remarkable for tenderness and zeal.

It represents God as pleading with man as a father pleads with his wayward son.

Nowhere in Holy Scripture is the love of God more beautifully revealed. He is gentle and patient, infinitely loving, but infinitely just.

In the New Testament the fatherhood of God is more explicitly taught, but in this prophecy it is implied and illustrated.

The whole spirit of the book is love, love unquenchable and long suffering, but sorely tried and wounded by the sullen stubbornness of the object of its affection.

The sublime justice of God is the more impressive when contrasted with the yearning tenderness of the divine compassion. Israel is incorrigible, but Jehovah is long suffering. The people are rebellious but God is still waiting to be gracious.

The book is composed of two sections—Chapters I-III, and Chapters IV-XIV.

These sections differ so much in style and point of view, that critics think they were probably written at different times, separated by an interval of some ten or fifteen years.

Probably during this interval King Jereboam II died, and the northern nations began that period of decline that hastened to its end, in little more than twenty years.

This king, Jereboam II, was by far the greatest ruler the northern kingdom ever had. He was remarkably successful as a soldier, and a strong executive. During his reign the people were hopeful and enjoyed a good measure of prosperity.

But the foundation of their prosperity lacked moral soundness and religious faith; and therefore the whole social order broke down as soon as the strong hand of the king was removed.

Political confusion, moral corruption, and the hostility of neighboring nations brought on the rapid and disastrous decline which terminated in the fall of Samaria and the carrying away of the people by Shalmaneser—Sargon—, King of Assyria, and the disappearance of the little kingdom from the nations of the earth. It was swept away "like a chip upon the waters."

During the time of Jereboam II, there was much to arouse the apprehension of the prophet who observed the moral and religious corruption of the people. In the first section he rebuked the nation for their unfaithfulness to God. He represents their apostacy in the parable of the unfaithful wife. It is a striking figure, as it portrays the repeated and shameless defections of the nation and the marvelous forbearance of God. The warnings of judgment are clearly announced, but the offer of pardon and renewed favor on condition of their repentance is urged in the terms of earnest entreaty. God opens "a door of hope" and promises "to break the bow and the sword, and the battle of the land, and will make them to lie down in safety."

"I will betroth thee unto me forever; yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness and in judgment and in loving kindness and in mercies. I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulness; and thou shalt know the Lord."

Although the moral and religious conditions were deplorable, and merited the scathing rebuke which the prophet uttered so fearlessly, the outlook was not yet hopeless.

In the second section the form and contents of the book seems

to reflect the disordered and distressed condition of the people, specially of the northern kingdom. The style is abrupt and broken. It gives the impression of a mind distressed and almost despairing, yet unwilling to give up the high hopes which it had entertained.

At times the prophet cries out in agony over the state of the people, and pours out his very soul in anguish over the incorrigible defection of the nation. He lifts up his voice in fervent appeals and warnings.

"Set the trumpet to thy mouth. As an eagle he cometh against the house of the Lord because they have transgressed my covenant and trespassed against my law."

"For they have sown the wind and they shall reap the whirlwind."

"I have written to him the great things of my law, but they were counted a strange thing to him."

"My God will cast them away, because they did not hearken unto him, and they shall be wanderers among the nations."

And with many other earnest words of warning the impending doom is predicted and charged to their own apostacy.

But these severe rebukes are the faithful words of a friend, and are always followed immediately by the most tender expressions of love, and yearning appeals to their conscience, urging repentance and return to God.

God is represented as a friend, longing to bless them, as a father distressed by the waywardness of a dearly beloved son.

Nowhere has the emotions, the affections, and the unquenchable compassion of God been more vividly portrayed. Even the great parable of the prodigal son does not more beautifully reveal the tender love of a heavenly father for the individual sinner, than these visions of Hosea express the love of God for the rebellious nation. For example, this appeal to their national history. "When Israel was a child, then I loved him." "I taught Ephraim to walk." "I took them in my arms." "I



drew them with the cords of a man, with bands of love." "I was to them as they that take off the yoke on their jaws, and I laid meat before them." "How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? How shall I let thee go, O Israel? How am I to make thee as Admah, or Zeboim? My heart is wrung within me. My compassions are kindled; I will not perform the fierceness of mine anger. I am not willing to destroy Ephraim. For God am I and not man."

So the prophet pictures the long suffering gentleness of God and the marvelous love that will not yield; the loving kindness that pleads and entreats and patiently waits. Like as a father pitieth his children so the Lord's heart is represented as yearning for the salvation of the nation.

But, alas, Israel is incorrigible; and the prophet reluctantly takes up again the office of accuser, and in pathetic tones recites the shameful story of their guilt, ingratitude and folly.

"Israel hath provoked to anger most bitterly, therefore, shall his blood be left upon him, and his reproach shall his Lord return upon him."

"For Israel hath behaved himself stubbornly like a stubborn heifer." "I have redeemed them, yet have they spoken lies against me."

"Ephraim is joined to his idols, let him alone." But this terrible sentence—let him alone—is not yet spoken as imperative and final, but rather as the inevitable unless there is repentance.

Again the prophet pleads in God's name that they consider and repent and seek salvation.

He cries, "Come, let us return unto the Lord; for He hath torn and He will heal us. He hath smitten and He will bind us up. After two days he will revive us, and the third day he will raise us up, and we shall live before him. And let us know, let us follow on to know the Lord. His going forth is sure as the morning; and he shall come unto us as the rain, as the latter

rain that watereth the earth."

So the entire prophecy sways back and forth in its tide of intense and tender feeling. Like some strong man well nigh distracted by his love and by his pity, so the prophet in the name of God pleads, admonishes, urges and appeals, and hoping against hope, and brave in the face of despair, closes his prophecy with an impassioned appeal to the sullen and insensate nation to return to God—a plea that for dignity and noble tenderness is unsurpassed in all the literature of the world.

"O Israel, return unto the Lord thy God, for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity. Take with you words and return unto the Lord. Say unto him, 'Take away all iniquity and receive us graciously.'"

Then the Lord will answer, "I will heal all thy backslidings. I will love them freely, for mine anger is turned away from them.

"I will be as the dew unto Israel,  
He shall blossom as the Lily.  
And strike his roots deep as Lebanon  
His branches shall spread  
And his beauty shall be as the olive tree  
And his smell as Lebanon."

But this beautiful vision was never realized. Israel did not return. They would not come that they might have life.

They had "plowed wickedness", and they went on to "reap iniquity." They have spoken lies against God, and in due time they ate the fruit of lies.

Thus we apprehend the great message of this prophecy. It is a great revelation of God's attitude toward sinful and rebellious men. The immediate purpose was to warn Israel and to call the nation to repentance, but it is the truth of God for all time, as true today as in Hosea's day. As precious for you

and me as for that ancient people. A most comforting revelation of his infinite grace, his compassion and fatherly affection; but no less clear and forceable is the revelation of his eternal justice.

It stands as a great beacon light midway between Mt. Sinai and Mt. Calvary. The God revealed by this great light is the same as He who spake to Moses on the Mount, saying, "The Lord, the Lord, a God full of compassion and gracious, slow to anger and plenteous in mercy and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin. And that will by no means clear the guilty." And the same who wept over Jerusalem and said, "How often would I have gathered thy children together as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate."

But this fundamental truth is by no means the only lesson of this great book. No other book is more instructive in the practical duties of life or more profound in its teaching of spiritual truth.

The doctrine which underlies the whole book is the doctrine of *God's sovereignty*. "His law is perfect. Just and right is he" is the fundamental truth from which the prophet draws every inference of duty, all hope and aspiration, every warning and reproof. God is a loving father, and because of his love he reveals the laws, the everlasting principles by which alone man can reach blessedness or attain to excellence.

"I hewed them by the prophets; I have slain them by the words of my mouth; and my judgments are as the light that goeth forth. For I desire mercy and not sacrifice, and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings."

The relation of man to God is that of a son to a father. His duty is obedience, not slavish obedience because of God's power to punish, but willing obedience to *reasonable* demands. The charge against man is that he is stubborn and unreasonable, he

is stupid and sullen. "Ephraim is a silly dove without intelligence." But this stupidity is not mere ignorance but the besotted stupidity that comes from vice and negligence. It is the natural consequence of evil doing. "Harlotry and wine take away the intelligence of my people."

"And they consider not in their hearts that I remember all their wickedness; now have their own doings beset them round about."

This is the scientific statement of it: The same truth that Dr. James has so well stated in his *Psychology*, "We are spinning our own fates for good or evil, never to be undone. Every smallest stroke of virtue or of vice leaves its little scar. The drunken Rip Van Winkle in Jefferson's play excuses himself for every dereliction by saying, 'I don't count this time.' Well, he may not count it, but it is being counted none the less. Down among his nerve cells and fibres, the molecules are registering and storing it up to be used against him when the next temptation comes."

Then comes the next link in the chain of evil consequences of their disobedience, the stupidity—the dullness of moral judgment—the weakness of will, and the inflamed desire make resistance to evil almost impossible. From bad to worse is the law of nature. "When he offended in Bael, he died, and now they sin more and more."

"Things ill begun make strong themselves by ill." So Macbeth found, and so we all must find.

Dull and insensate they lose the power to appreciate moral excellence, and even the ability to know good from evil. The only hope of recovery is by return to God. He only is able to heal them. And this he is ready and willing to do. He will come and teach you righteousness. "I will heal their backsliding. I will love them freely."

The prophecy of this book is chiefly directed to the northern kingdom—Ephraim, he calls it—but the southern kingdom is

not forgotten. The conditions there were not so bad as in the north. "Judah yet ruleth with God and is faithful with the holy one." It had not utterly forsaken God's covenant nor corrupted his worship, yet "The Lord hath a controversy with Judah and will punish Jacob according to his ways; according to his doings will he recompense him."

After a brief review of this wonderful history and the bountiful gifts they had received of God, the prophet cries, "Therefore, turn thou to thy God; keep mercy and judgment, and wait on thy God continually."

The knowledge of the occasion of these prophecies, and the immediate object of their deliverance; is of importance only as this knowledge helps us to fuller understanding of the revelation given.

The revelation itself is for all times and all peoples. Concrete examples make more vivid the messages which God speaks to you and me, for though times change and men change with them, God's law is unchangeable.

So the prophet closes his brief but wonderful book with the catholic commendation: "Who is wise, and he shall understand these things? prudent, and he shall know them? for the ways of the Lord are right, and the just shall walk in them; but transgressors shall fall therein."

## CHAPTER XV

### JOEL

**T**HE prophecy of Joel is a practical discourse on the subject of God's providence. The occasion of it was a devastating plague of locusts which had swept over the land of Judah and utterly destroyed every green leaf and tender plant, leaving poverty and famine in their wake.

Such plagues are not uncommon in that region, and the innumerable hosts of these ravenous insects and the damage they do is almost beyond belief.<sup>1</sup>

This visitation of which Joel speaks seems to have been one of unexampled severity, for he appeals to the oldest inhabitants if they had ever seen or known of such; and predicts that it shall be remembered for generations as a terrible disaster.

"Hear this, ye old men, and give ear, all ye inhabitants of the land.

"Hath this been in your days, or in the days of your fathers?

"Tell ye your children of it, and let your children tell their children, and their children another generation."

The prophet then depicts the dismay which it had brought upon the people of the land, and voices the distress of man and beast.

He gives a most vivid picture of the actual event.

"The appearance of them is as the appearance of horses; and as horsemen do they run. Like the noise of chariots on the tops of the mountains do they leap; like the noise of a flame of fire that devoureth the stubble, as a strong people set in battle array.

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1. For a vivid account of the plague of locusts see National Geographic Magazine Dec., 1915.

At their presence the people are in anguish.  
All faces waxed pale;  
They run like mighty men;  
They climb the wall like men of war;  
They march every one on his ways.

And they break not their ranks; neither doth one thrust another; they march every one in his path; they burst through the weapons and break not off their course.

They leap upon the city;  
They run upon the wall;  
They climb up unto the houses;  
They enter in at the windows like a thief.  
The earth quaketh before them;  
The heavens tremble;  
The sun and the moon are darkened,  
And the stars withdraw their shining."

Now the habit of mind with all the Hebrew prophets was to attribute all the activities of nature directly to the will and act of God. They did not, as we are accustomed to do, talk of the reign of law, and personify the forces of nature. They had "the mind that looks beyond"; they thought of "God within the shadow, keeping watch above his own."

In this they were wiser than we, and more reverent. They were not childish or superstitious more than we, but simpler and more direct.

Here was a great calamity, greater than we easily imagine, for it meant actual famine for all, and starvation for many. The prophet appealed to their religious instincts when he called the people to repentance and prayer.

Even now, in our age of hard materialistic temper, when great calamities befall us, we turn somewhat shamefacedly to

call on God for help.

So the prophet exhorts the people to turn to God, not in empty, formal sacrifice, as though God might be bribed to mercy, but "Turn ye unto me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning; and rend your hearts, not your garments, and turn unto the Lord your God; for he is gracious and full of compassion, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy, and repenteth him of evil." And the prophet adds, "Who knoweth whether he will not turn and leave a blessing behind."

The response of the people is not recorded, but it seems to be taken for granted, for from the end of the prophet's call for repentance the record goes on immediately to a second discourse—*xi:18*—in which we have the gracious response of God:

"Then was the Lord jealous for his land, and had pity on his people."

"Fear not, O land, be glad and rejoice; for the Lord hath done great things. Be not afraid, ye beasts of the field; for the pastures of the wilderness do spring; for the tree beareth her fruit, the fig tree and the vine do yield their strength.

"Be glad, then, ye children of Zion, and rejoice in the Lord your God."

On this gracious revelation of God's good will, the prophet founded a great sermon, in which he predicts increasing blessing and more abundant favor. "And it shall come to pass afterward that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions; and also upon my servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my Spirit."

There is the intimation of great changes, tumult and disasters—"The sun shall be turned into darkness and the moon into blood, before the great day of the Lord come."

But the purpose of God shall go grandly on to its fulfillment.



The nations shall be called to battle, and God shall judge the earth; kings and empires shall fall and be forgotten, but the covenant of God shall stand, and his gracious redemption shall be accomplished.

This prophetic discourse is couched in forceful words and impressive imagery.

"Proclaim ye this among the nations. Prepare war; stir up the mighty men. Let them come up."

"Beat your plowshares into swords, and your pruning hooks into spears; let the weak say, 'I am strong'."

"Let the nations bestir themselves, and come up to the valley of Jehoshaphat, for there will I sit to judge all nations."

"Put ye in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe. Come tread ye for the wine press is full and the vats overflow; for their wickedness is great.

"But the Lord will be a refuge unto his people, and a stronghold to the children of Israel."

"Egypt shall be a desolation, and Edom shall be a desolate wilderness, for the violence done to the children of Judah, because they have shed innocent blood in their land. But Judah shall abide forever and Jerusalem from generation to generation. And I will cleanse their blood which I have not cleansed; *for the Lord dwelleth in Zion.*"

## CHAPTER XVI

### AMOS

**A**LL that we know of the prophet Amos is what he tells us in his book. He says of himself, "I was no prophet neither was I one of the sons of the prophets; but I was a herdsman, and a dresser of sycamore trees; and the Lord took me from following the flock, and the Lord said unto me, 'Go prophesy unto my people Israel'."

This means that he was not trained in the school of the prophets, nor was one of the recognized profession, but, as we might say, a layman called of God to this special office.

It is an illustration and example of that remarkable feature of the old dispensation which recognized the prophetic office as independent of the organized church or state—a special and immediate commission of God—a gift and calling of divine grace.

It is also an instructive illustration of the method of God's Spirit. The message he had to deliver was from God, but the style and form of its deliverance are the prophet's own. He is no mere amanuensis writing records, no mere voice uttering sounds, but a seer, a man with a vision, inspired and illuminated, but speaking that which was his own conviction and the impulse of his own spiritual life.

We find his message in the words and figures of speech appropriate to his circumstances and habits of thought.

It is the voice of the herdsman, the vision of a man of the open fields and the simple life. It has that directness and concreteness that comes from habitual contact with the concrete realities of daily life. It is homely, familiar, plain.

The book is entitled, "The Words of Amos which he saw concerning Israel." It consists of a series of brief oracles and visions, without any very obvious order or sequence, dealing with the evils of his time and the punishments impending.

We do not know how, nor to what audience these were delivered, but they seem as though they were the briefs or texts from which he may have preached at much greater length.

They may be conveniently divided into three groups, as follows:

I. Chapters I-II. A series of short oracles directed against the sins of various nations, and predicting their punishment.

II. Chapters III-VI. A series of oracles directed against Israel, denouncing their offenses against good morals and their religious indifference, and warning the nation of impending doom.

III. Chapters VII-IX. Five visions or parables portraying the corruption of church and state, and the certainty of God's judgment.

In the first section the prophet brings severe indictments against the neighboring nations, and still more severe against Judah and Israel. Syria, Philistia, Tyre, Edom, Ammon and Moab are all charged with gross cruelty, with repeated and pitiless aggression against their neighbors. Because of these offenses, they are denounced as doomed to destruction—"For three transgressions and for four"—that is, because their cruelty is repeated and habitual—"I will not turn away the punishment thereof."

It is to be remarked that judgment is pronounced against these nations not on account of their religious error or false worship, but because of their gross offenses against the obvious and ordinary laws of morality—sins which the dullest sense of decency and manliness could not but recognize and protest against.

But the indictment brought against Judah and Israel includes

and emphasizes the sin of apostacy from their religious faith. "Because they have *rejected* the law of the Lord and have *not kept* my statutes." "I have brought you up out of the land of Egypt and led you forty years in the wilderness." "I raised up your sons for prophets and your young men for Nazarites. Is it not even thus, O ye children of Israel?"

Because of their greater privileges, their sin is greater and their condemnation more severe. This is the doctrine taught somewhat more explicitly by our Lord, when he said, "To whomsoever much is given of him shall much be required; and to whom they commit much, of him will they ask the more."

The second section of the book continues this strain of accusation and judgment, specifying in detail the sins and iniquities of the people.

"Hear this word, ye cows of Bashan"—coarse and brutish ones—"which oppress the poor, which crush the needy, which say to their lords, 'Bring, and let us drink'; ye that put away the evil day"—reckless and indifferent to consequences—"That lie upon beds of ivory, that sing idle songs." "That anoint themselves with chief ointments." Thus he charges them with sensuous and selfish living, bent on their own pleasures, devoted only to luxury and vice. Not only their morals, but their religion was corrupt. "They despise sound doctrine." "They hate him that reproacheth in the gate, and they abhor him that speaketh uprightly."

They worship with great zeal so far as form and outward service is concerned, but their whole religious service was insincere, an offense and an insult to Jehovah.

"I hate, I despise your feasts, and I will take no delight in your solemn assemblies." "Take away from me the noise of thy songs; for I will not hear the melody of thy viols."

With these and other words the prophet depicts to the people their corrupt and sinful condition. Then he warns them of the terrible judgments that must surely come upon them.

He reminds them that God's displeasure had been manifested many times in their history, that they were not ignorant of his demands for righteousness. He had chastised them for warning and reproof, but they would not lay it to heart.

"Therefore, thus will I do unto thee, O Israel; and because I will do this unto thee, prepare to meet thy God, O Israel. For, lo, he that formeth the mountains and createth the wind and declareth unto man his thought, that maketh the morning darkness, and treadeth upon the high places of the earth; the Lord God of hosts is his name."

The whole of the fifth and sixth chapters is a terrible cry of distress; of anguish and shame for their condition, of horror and pity in view of their approaching doom.

He offers here no thought of escape, he sees no ray of hope; the whole sky is dark, and the storm is ready to break, but the people will not awake to their danger, nor heed his warning cry.

In the third section—chapters VII-IX we have much the same matter, but it is presented in different form, and a possibility of escape by repentance is urged again and again, but each time the hope is discouraged by the callous indifference of the people.

In the first vision the prophet sees the judgment of the Lord in the figure of locusts, which the Lord God formed and sent forth to destroy the land, but when they had destroyed much, the prophet pleads for the people on the ground of their weakness. "I said, 'O Lord God, forgive, I beseech thee; how shall Jacob stand for he is small.' The Lord repented concerning this: 'It shall not be,' said the Lord."

The second vision is of a great fire which devoured the great deep and was about to destroy the land. Again the prophet intercedes on the ground of man's frailty. "O Lord God, cease, I beseech thee, for how shall Jacob stand, for he is small." And again the Lord spares the people. "This, also, shall not

be,' saith the Lord."

In these parables the prophet pictures the long suffering mercy of God. Twice has he, in pity, withheld his judgment.

In the third vision he sees the execution of divine justice. This is the vision of the plumbline: "Behold, the Lord stood beside a wall made by a plumbline, with a plumbline in his hand."

And He declares, "I will set a plumbline in the midst of my people Israel: I will not again pass them by anymore."

This vision must be considered in connection with those that precede it. They represent him as slow to wrath. This teaches that he will by no means clear the guilty. Since Israel has disregarded his patient and repeated offer of mercy, he must deal with them as their sins deserve. The plumbline of strict justice will be applied, and punishment will be meted out according to it; and this punishment is announced in specific terms. The house of Jereboam shall fall by the sword, and the nation shall be destroyed.

The vision of the summer fruit adds another thought to the thought of certainty of punishment, that is, that it was immanent,—near at hand. The nation is ripe for destruction. "The end is come upon my people Israel. I will not again pass by them anymore."

As proof and illustration of this ripeness the prophet cites the specific sins which were notorious and inexcusable. "Here this, O ye that swallow up the needy and cause the poor of the land to fail." Who deliberately "buy the poor for silver and the needy for a pair of shoes." "Shall not the land tremble for this and everyone mourn that dwelleth therein."

Then again the prophet describes in fearful vividness the sudden and terrible calamity that should fall upon the land. It should come suddenly as the darkening of the sun at noonday. "In the midst of feasting, they should be caused to mourn, as the mourning for an only son."

The worst of it should be the utter lack of spiritual wisdom. "A famine, not of bread nor a thirst for water, but of the hearing of the words of the Lord." Their case is the hopeless wandering of the blind who cannot find the way. "They shall fall and never rise again."

The last vision is a terrible picture of the destruction of the nation in the ruin of the altar. The altar was the symbol of their covenant with God. The destruction of the altar signified the dissolution of that covenant. It is the formal rejection and disowning of the people and the withdrawal of God's protecting care, a fearful outpouring of justice long withheld in mercy. The storm breaks and the avenging forces of the moral universe pursue the workers of iniquity.

There is no escape from the consequences of sin, when once the hand of mercy is withdrawn.

The relentless principles of justice are represented as pursuing the fugitives to the remotest limits of the universe. The picture is one of the most terrible ever drawn by the imagination of man. "Though they dig into Sheol, thence shall my hand take them; and though they climb up to heaven, thence will I bring them down. And though they hide in the top of Carmel, I will search and take them out thence; and though they be hid from my sight in the bottom of the sea, thence will I command the serpent and he shall bite them."

Thus did Amos exhaust the resources of spoken thought to proclaim the everlasting truths of God's abhorrence of sin, of cruelty, dishonesty, falsehood and all manner of unrighteousness.

Little is said here of religious defection. It is recognized as the source of evil doing, but the judgments are pronounced against the offences—against the great moral obligations which are known and acknowledged of all men.

Every word of this great book is as true and pertinent today as when they first were spoken.

It is an unfading picture of the moral order of the world, an order as old as the constitution of the universe, as immutable as God himself.

The book does not close with this fearsome picture of eternal justice.

The dark sky is illuminated by the sunshine of God's gracious purpose.

The everlasting covenant abides and the purpose of redemption is not thwarted by the failure or apostacy of any generation.

The justice of God is never set aside, but his mercy endureth forever, and He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till he have established righteousness upon the earth.

So the prophecy closes with the comforting assurance, "In that day will I raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen, and close up the breaches thereof; and I will raise up its ruins and I will build it as in the day of old."



## CHAPTER XVII

### OBADIAH

**T**HE Book of Obadiah is the shortest of all the books of the Old Testament, and the least attractive.

It consists of one brief message, announcing the doom of Edom. This is given in the first four verses, and the rest of the chapter is the prophet's comment on the destruction which he foresaw.

The malignant cruelty of Edom in the day of Judah's misfortune, and her shameful rejoicing over her neighbor's distress, no doubt merited the resentment which the Jews felt against her.

The fact that the nation was supposed to be descended from Esau, and was thus the twin-brother to Israel, had, in earlier times, been recognized as the basis of a certain degree of sympathy between them; and in fact, the laws of Israel did make a distinction between Edom and other heathen nations; e. g., "Thou shalt not abhor an Edomite, he is thy brother." Deut. xxiii:7.

But, on the other hand, what they had in common served to intensify their sense of that antipathy which existed between their national ideals.

Israel was above all else a religious nation,—not always highly moral, never living up to his ideals, but always possessed of a strong passion for the ideal, abounding in hopes and fertile in visions. Edom, like Esau their father, was a "profane person." "Essentially irreligious, living for food and spoil and vengeance, with no national conscience or ideals," so Dr. George Adam Smith describes them, and adds, "It is therefore no mere passion for revenge which inspires these few hot verses of Obadiah—

no doubt there is exultation in the news he hears; but beneath such savage tempers, there beats a heart that beats for the highest things, and now, in its martyrdom, sees them baffled and mocked by a people without vision and without feeling.

Justice and mercy and truth; the education of humanity in the law of God, the establishment of his will upon earth—these things, it is true, are not mentioned in the Book of Obadiah, but it is for sake of some dim instinct of them that its wrath is poured upon foes whose treachery and malice seek to make them impossible by destroying the one nation on earth who then believed in them and lived for them.

Consider the situation. It was the darkest hour of Israel's history. City and Temple had fallen; the people had been carried away. Up over the empty land the waves of mocking heathen had flowed; there was none to beat them back.

A Jew who had lived through these things, who had seen the day of Jerusalem's fall, and passed from her ruins under the mocking of her foes, dared to cry back unto the large mouths they made: "'Our day is not spent; we shall return for the things we live for; the land shall yet be ours, and the kingdom our God's.' Brave hot heart. It shall be as thou sayest."

The case of Obadiah could hardly ask a more eloquent advocate; and even if the "hot heart" seems somewhat lacking in the spirit of forgiveness that we hear in the words that were spoken on the cross, "Father, forgive them," we remember that it is God's love for man that constrains him to destroy them that destroy the earth; and, after all, there is no substitute for justice.

#### HAGGAI

Haggai is the prophet of the practical. He was the first of those who prophesied after the return of the Jews from Babylon to Jerusalem. They were a feeble folk, beset by difficulties,

and burdened with a task almost too great for human strength. Inspired as they were by memories of a great past and hopes for a greater future, they were, nevertheless, sorely pressed by their present poverty and necessary toil. To find food and shelter, to restore some sort of social order, and lay foundations for the new state were labors that might well seem to be all that they could possibly accomplish.

But Haggai had set his heart on one thing, the rebuilding of the temple.

It seems, perhaps, at first sight, that this was a matter that might be postponed until the absolute necessities of life were more secure.

So it seemed to those whom he addressed. But the prophet was wiser than his critics, for he appreciated, as they did not, the fact that the rebuilding of the temple was an absolute necessity to their national life. Without it, the continuity of their religious life could not be sustained. They could not hope for political independence, and the bonds of common blood and common ethical customs could not prevent the disintegration of their national ideals, unless they had some central object of devotion, some nucleus around which their new life might organize and be developed.

To suppose that Haggai was zealous only for the restoration of Ecclesiastical functions, that he was of the Pharisaic spirit that imagined that ritual and sacrifice constitute religion and purchase the favor of God, is to mistake the meaning of his message utterly. What he urged was the necessary means to the rebuilding of their national hopes, the restoration of divinely ordained means of grace by which alone the moral and spiritual blessings for which Israel had always stood could be realized. His appeal to the unfruitful seasons as an evidence of God's displeasure was the point of view of all ancient nations; and was, on the whole, much nearer the truth than our modern habit of mind which attributes all natural phenomena to a blind

and aimless action of forces, according to what we personify under the name of nature. That the permanent prosperity of any people is due to *moral causes* is unquestionable,—attested by every page of history.

In attributing bad harvests to God's disfavor, the prophets only assert, in particular, what is, in general, admitted by all. God keeps an open account with men; he does not balance his books at the end of every month, or every year; but, in the long run, the books of the universe do balance, the moral, and the spiritual, and the natural are one harmonious system—a cosmos.

It is a commonplace of science that you cannot cheat nature; soon or late we reap what we have sown. Haggai puts it only a little more directly when he cries, "He that earneth wages earneth wages to put into a bag with holes." The *net result* of our activities is dependent on the completeness of our conformity to the laws of God, moral and physical.

The response of the people to this preaching of Haggai was prompt and cordial, and the work of rebuilding the temple was begun. The feebleness of their resources made it impossible to rebuild the temple in its former glory. And the contrast between the new and the old was painful and discouraging. But Haggai lifts up his voice in comfort and encouragement: "Be strong, O Zerubbabel; be strong, O Joshua; be strong, all ye people of the land, for I am with you saith the Lord of hosts." The point of this message is that the important matter is not the material glory of their building, but the spirit that was in them.

"The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, saith the Lord of hosts." He had no need of these things, from men, but he did desire the loyal devotion which could be shown in no other way than by their willingness to sacrifice for the cause of truth and righteousness.

Then follows the vision of the future in which the prophet sees the strength of kingdoms destroyed, and the "desirable

things" of all nations shall come, and I will fill this house with glory, saith the Lord of hosts." The things that really matter are secure.

### JONAH

The Book of Jonah can hardly be called prophecy, in the ordinary sense of the term.

In form, it is a simple, and exceedingly well told story of a prophet's experience. Like the stories of Daniel and his friends, the message is conveyed rather by the action than by the words of the prophet.

The story is familiar, and falls in three sections: 1st, The prophet's flight from the call of duty, and his miraculous arrest—Chapter I; 2nd, his prayer, II; 3rd, his mission to Ninevah accomplished, III.

Whether the story is to be interpreted literally, and his experience taken as actual fact, or the whole story to be understood as a parable, is a much debated question.

It seems probable that the latter view would be more readily accepted if it were not so often advocated on *grounds* that are not acceptable, namely, the incredibility of miracles.

When we are asked to take it as an allegory, *because* it is incredible as history, we are apt to refuse, because we do not believe that miracles are essentially incredible, holding that miracles are, like everything else, matters of evidence—that there is no *a priori* obstacle to the belief in the supernatural, nor any reason to assume that God does not interpose his hand in *extraordinary ways* to accomplish his wise purposes.

This belief, which is perfectly reasonable, does not question the uniformity of natural law, nor deny the presumption that the order of nature is reliable, but simply holds that what has happened can be known only by the examination of evidence.

The firmest conviction that miracles have occurred, however,

does not oblige us to assume that every narrative that can be taken literally must be so interpreted.

It is certain, as we have already seen, that much of Hebrew prophecy is given in the forms of allegory, symbols and dramatic acts, either done or described. The teachings of Jesus, also, are full of parables and other figures. It is certainly not incongruous, not surprising, if this book be found to be an example of this familiar method of revelation.

It may be taken as a safe rule that any writer should be taken literally, unless there are in his writings some adequate grounds for believing that he did not intend to be so understood.

The question whether this book is to be taken literally or allegorically is therefore a question of literary judgment.

We cannot here discuss the evidence, but appeal to each reader of the book to judge for himself whether the impression he receives is not distinctly that of allegory rather than the narration of actual events.

To me, the story has all the appearance of a parable, and I am no more concerned with the problem of the great fish than I am with the question whether the parable of the prodigal son related an actual or a supposed case.

However, I have no quarrel with those who judge the book to be a literal account of actual experience. The great lesson of the book is unaffected, and it is the lesson—the revelation—that is important.

What, then, is the lesson of the book of Jonah? To answer this, we must consider somewhat carefully the place of this book in the scheme of prophecy—not especially its date, for that is uncertain and not important; but its contribution to the *system of truth* revealed in holy writ.

One of the most fundamental doctrines of the whole Old Testament, the doctrine that most distinguished the religion of Abraham and his seed from the other religions of the world, was *the unity and sovereignty of God*.

“Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord.”

The covenant with Abraham was most explicitly made for the blessing of all nations. The special office of the seed of Abraham was to mediate redemption for the whole world; for this they received their peculiar privileges and discipline. This was their mission, their trust from God.

Whenever they lost sight of this truth, when they became narrow in their views and selfish, they were fleeing from the task imposed upon them, and God's hand was turned against them, as against Jonah when he shirked his mission and fled to Tarshish.

The afflictions that came upon the children of Israel were, in the view of all the prophets, God's rod of correction to bring them back to loyalty and fidelity to their trust.

The prayer of Jonah—Chapter II, is a most fit expression of the proper attitude of mind of a chastised and repentant people, and can hardly be other than a poet's expression of the nation's experience, and the pious reflection of the prophet on their state.

Now the historic fact was that God did not destroy Israel nor disannul his covenant. He “corrected them in judgment” and restored them to their office and renewed their commission. Even as the word of the Lord came unto Jonah the second time, saying, “Arise, go unto Ninevah, that great city and preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee;” so God renews the order to the nation, “Be a blessing to the world.”

Then, as Jonah's preaching aroused Nineveh to repentance and reform, and thus God's judgment was averted, Jonah, instead of rejoicing in God's mercy, is angry because such compassion is shown for a heathen people, and God very patiently corrected this vindictive spirit by appealing to his sympathy for the innocent and ignorant, and even the cattle whose destruction would be involved in the destruction of the city.

As an allegory, it is a wonderful picture of the history of Israel, their attitude of mind toward other nations, and the very

essence of their office in the redemptive purpose of God. It is a beautiful lesson on the tender mercy of God and his long-suffering patience.



## CHAPTER XVIII

### MICAH

**T**HE Prophet Micah was contemporary with the great Isaiah, and not unworthy of such association. He prophesied in the days of Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, and therefore, before the dark shadows of the great captivity had fallen across the nation's path. The word of the Lord that came to him concerned Samaria as well as Jerusalem—Israel and Judah. The book may be divided conveniently into three parts:

I. Chapters I-v consists of a series of seven sermons on the same general theme, the destruction that would surely come upon both Samaria and Jerusalem, unless they turned from their iniquity. The doom of the northern kingdom seems most imminent; sometimes it is spoken of as already being executed.

The indictment brought against Judah is chiefly the charge of greed and avarice, which led to cruelty and oppression of the poor and the helpless. There is no gentleness of touch in the hand which wields the rod in these rebukes.

"Hear this, ye heads of the house of Jacob, and rulers of the house of Israel, that abhor judgment and prevent all equity. They build up Zion with blood, and Jerusalem with iniquity. The heads thereof judge for reward, and the priests thereof teach for hire, and the prophets thereof divine for money; yet will they lean upon the Lord and say, 'Is not the Lord in the midst of us? No evil shall come upon us.' Therefore shall Zion for your sake be plowed as a field, and Jerusalem shall become heaps, and the mountain of the house as the high places of a forest." III:9-12.

Such was his manner toward his contemporary rulers; definite and specific in his charges, unsparing in his denunciations.

But he was no mere pessimistic critic of his people, but the most hopeful of seers, and most fervent of orators pleading for reform. He does not conceal his contempt for the prophets who preach smooth things, and belittle the fear of judgment to come:

"If a man walking in wind and falsehood do lie saying, 'I will prophesy unto thee of wine and strong drink; he shall even be the prophet of this people,'"—the kind of prophet they desire.

Micah's sympathy is with the poor and the oppressed, and he has been well called the prophet of the poor; a most sane and wholesome prophet for the poor in every age, for there is no trace of sickly sentiment, nor the class prejudice, which so often mars the well meant preachments to the poor.

But Micah is at his best when he turns to the visions of the future. The unfaithfulness of his contemporaries, though it might involve the nation in very great disasters,—as indeed it did,—could not break God's covenant, nor destroy the hope of glory to come in the fullness of the time.

Isaiah himself has nothing brighter than this vision of the latter days: "But in the latter days it shall come to pass that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills; and peoples shall flow into it; and many nations shall go and say, 'Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths; for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. And he shall judge between many peoples, and shall reprove strong nations afar off; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any-more. But they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree, and none shall make them afraid, for the mouth of

the Lord hath spoken it." IV:1-4. The first three of these verses occur also in Isaiah II:2-4, but are generally supposed to be quoted from Micah, or both quoted from some earlier prophet.

Section II. Chapter VI:1-8 is a little drama—probably the most exquisite in the world. It is entitled *The Lord's Controversy with His People*.

The scene presents a court of justice,—or perhaps we should describe it more exactly as a court of arbitration, which is asked to decide upon the equity of Jehovah's claims upon all men, but particularly, upon those to whom he had given such clear revelation of his will.

The court, in the drama, is "the mountains and the strong foundations of the earth." What a fine figure it is! The calmness, the majesty, the poise and dignity, that should ever clothe the office of the judge, are nowhere else so splendidly exhibited as in the massive mountains with their spotless ermine of eternal snow.

Doubtless, "the mountains and the strong foundations of the earth" stand for the essential constitution of the world—the order of the universe—the nature of things; and God's challenge is to test his claims by the everlasting and immutable principles of fairness, equity and justice. His "case" is to prove *the reasonableness of his commandments*.

In the statement of his case he makes no appeal to his right as creator to dictate to his creature; no claim to superior wisdom. He presents his claim on the broad and common ground of moral rightness, and presses it as *sweetly reasonable*.

As evidence of his kindness he offers historic facts, which were well known and undisputed:

"I brought thee out of the land of Egypt;  
I redeemed thee from the house of servants;  
I sent before thee Moses, and Aaron, and Miriam."

He calls Baalam as a witness of his gracious purpose which he accomplished in the "great and terrible wilderness."

"Remember," he pleads, "only remember your history"; and with this he rests his case.

The answer of the people—vs 6-8—is peevish and uncandid. It consists of two complaints; first, that they did not understand what God would have them do. "Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the most high God"; second, that the required service does not seem to them to be reasonable, or effective to their good.

"Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams or ten thousand rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, or the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?"

This is the best case they can possibly make out. It is essentially the answer of the irreligious everywhere, querulous, and not ingenuous.

These brief statements set the case before the court, and the court delivers its judgment; and this is, of course, the gist of the matter, the substance of the message which the prophet delivers to the people.

The judgment is concise and dignified and absolute.

"The Lord *hath* showed thee, O man, what is good." The plea of ignorance is rejected. The calm judgment of the unprejudiced mountains—the dispassionate conclusion of common sense and human intelligence, is that we do know what is right. God has showed us what is good. Our instinct of righteousness is a light—a law written in our heart, our thoughts meanwhile accusing or else excusing one another.

This is the *fact* of the matter, by nature and revelation God hath showed thee what is good.

Moreover, that which God demands is nothing strange or mysterious, or unreasonable, as they had implied it was. "What doth the Lord require of thee but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?"

These are the demands of God. They are the requisite of our moral life and health; they are simple, obvious, and approved by all intelligence.

This passage is well judged by Dr. Smith to be "the greatest saying of the Old Testament" concerning the duty which God requires of man.

The third section, VI:9—VII, is composed of several short sermons, sharply rebuking the sins and iniquities of his time, especially their dishonesty and falsehood in business, corruption and bribery in official life, and greed and cruelty on every hand.

"The prince asketh, and the judge is ready for a reward. The great man, he uttereth the mischief of his soul; thus they weave it together. The best of them is as a brier; the most upright as a hedge of thorns."

Against this evil he denounces the judgment of God. Nevertheless, he is not discouraged, for, looking beyond the chastisement which should come, he sees the dawning of a brighter day, and closes his book with a psalm of hope,—*"Who is a God like unto thee, that pardonest iniquity, and passeth by transgression of the remnant of his heritage? He retaineth not his anger forever, because he delighteth in mercy. He will turn again and have compassion upon us; he will tread our iniquities under foot, and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea."*

#### ZECHARIAH

The prophecies of Zechariah voice the hopes of the nation restored to their own land, and yet restrain them by the wholesome admonition that they can be realized only by obedience to the righteous law of God. He sings the sweet songs of a glad new day, and depicts its glory in the brilliant colors and the oriental imagery of the land in which he grew to manhood.

His prophecy is a veritable picture-book, full of delightful

scenes that tell in parable of the new life of peace and righteousness and joy. The first of these gives a striking picture of the place and office of Israel in the world.

"I saw by night and behold a man riding upon a red horse stood among the myrtle trees of the grove," and behind him others on sorrel and bay and white horses. These are they whom the Lord hath sent to walk to and fro through the earth. They report to the angel that they have gone through the earth, "and behold all the earth sitteth still and is at rest."

The world was making no progress it was stagnant and inert.

This the prophet conceives to be the reason why "the Lord is sore displeased with the heathen at ease. Therefore thus saith the Lord I am returned to Jerusalem with mercies, my house shall be built in it saith the Lord." Here, as always it is God's concern for the world that moves him to his gracious purposes. Here as always Israel is called to service, to an office that was indeed her honor, but only because it was an opportunity to bless the world; distinction indeed, but more especially a privilege and responsibility.

Such is Zechariah's notion of the purpose of Israel's restoration.

From this springs naturally the consideration of the duties of such an office, and the means of their accomplishment. These are set forth in a series of parables and figures beautiful in their form and profound in their contents.

1. He sees a man with a measuring line in his hand—the engineer going forth to lay out the plans of the new city, which should need no wall for it should embrace the whole earth.

2. The Proclamation, calling the people from the "four winds of heaven" to return with joy and hope.

"Sing and rejoice O daughter of Zion, for, lo, I come and will dwell in thee in the midst of thee, saith the Lord."

The purification of the church presented in the parable of the high priest stripped of his filthy garments and clothed with a

change of raiment and crowned with a "fair mitre."

4. The vision of the golden candlesticks and the two olive trees symbolizes the restored spiritual and temporal power.

5. The flying roll is the curse, or penalty, that shall of itself—in the very nature of things, come upon the thief and the liar.

6. The woman in the ephah carried to the land of Babylon, personifying the guilt of Israel removed to the land of their captivity but not restored.

7. The four chariots, God's avenging army to execute his judgment on the various nations.

In connection with these figures of Israel's restoration and reform are frequent warnings and exhortations. Each of these visions is indeed a text from which the prophet preaches righteousness and promises blessing, conditioned always on the faithfulness and zeal of the people in the way of holiness.

The seventh and eighth chapters give historic incidents, and further exhortation suggested by the incidents and predictions of the messianic kingdom.

Thus far the prophecies of Zechariah are very simple and easily interpreted. They present in clear and beautiful pictures the essential principles of true religion and pure morality. And taking these as texts preach a hopeful but trenchant gospel. Two great thoughts recur so frequently as to be almost a refrain, though not recurring in the same words.

First, "I will save you, and ye shall be a blessing." Second, remember justice and mercy, speak truth and seek peace, for because they refused to hear these commandments your fathers "were scattered with the whirlwind among the nations."

The other chapters of the book of Zechariah are so different from these that they are generally held to be by some other author.

Whether the critics be right or wrong in this is really a matter of very small importance. Whether the voice is the voice of

Zechariah or some other, the message is consistent and harmonious.

But as the vision of the future penetrates to more remote and later years, the view grows darker and more complex. The fine ideals of the zealous band who returned with joy grew dim, and the people fell away from their enthusiastic aspirations. The shadows gather; storms are forecast, and the terrors of a darkness that shall test the faith of the saints. The future foreseen by the prophet is tragic and awful, and some of it shameful and sad; but through it all, the star of hope shines with an undimmed luster, and now and then the bright sunshine of God's favor bursts upon the scene. Not for a moment does the prophet doubt the final triumph of the hope of Israel "At evening time it shall be light."

"The time shall come when the Lord shall be king over all the earth. In that day shall there be one Lord and his name one." And the spirit of common life shall be religious. In that day shall there be upon the bridles of the horses '*Holiness unto the Lord.*'

The whole prophecy of the book of Zechariah, by whatever authors, is a magnificent drama, setting forth the awful purposes of God, depicting the agony of the ages to come, with their trouble and anguish, their splendid heroism and their sad deflections, their heartbreaking failures and their sublime successes.

Sometimes we liken it to the sweet swan song of dying prophecy; at other times, it seems rather the trumpet call to battle or the great shout of those who march to victory; but, at all times, the undertone is confidence in the divine and solemn destiny of Israel as the servant of Jehovah. The motif of it all is

"I will say, It is my people; and they shall say, The Lord is my God."



## MALACHI

The abounding hope which filled the hearts of that little band of exiles who returned from Babylon soon died, when the difficulties of their task were realized. The visions that they cherished of a new kingdom, more glorious than the old, gave place to very serious doubt as to whether they could exist at all in the land of their fathers.

"Hope deferred maketh the heart sick," and the sickness is severe in proportion to the brightness of the hope.

The hopes of the returning exiles had been very high, based, as they were, upon the promises made to their fathers and the oath which he swore to Abraham.

Like the disciples of Jesus, who thought that the kingdom of God should immediately appear, and, because it did not, went back and walked no more with him, so these disappointed ones fell away from their high ideals, and a spirit of bitter carelessness prevailed; and many openly expressed contempt for the faith of their fathers.

There are always some who are impatient with the slow processes of evolution, who demand fruit the next day after the seed is sown. There is a form of skepticism which cries, "Let him make speed, let him hasten his work that we may see it; and let the counsel of the Holy One of Israel draw nigh and come, that we may know it!" The conditions of the time after the return were such as to produce this state of mind. It was a condition that demanded more faith and patience than is given to most men. It was a crisis in the history of redemption.

To meet the need of such a time, God sent the prophet who is known as Malachi—though the critics tell us that this is probably not the name of the man, but a title meaning "My Messenger." This, however, is all we care to know—that he was God's Messenger.

His message is important. It is addressed to the needs of the

time, as we have seen those needs to be. It is specifically addressed to various groups or classes. The following good analysis of the book is taken from Prof. Moulton's *Modern Readers' Bible*—

“1. A message to God's chosen people. They doubt his love: what better proof could he give than his original choice of them? 2. A message to priests. These, who should be the Lord's messengers, pollute his altar by offering contemptible gifts such as they would never present to the governor; it is the Gentiles who hold Jehovah in honour. The message (commandment) is that God curses their blessings (Joel, chapter 1:9); and in so doing God is keeping, not breaking, his covenant with Levi. 3. A message to Judah. Judah has betrayed the wife of his youth in marrying the daughter of a strange God. (The meaning is not that Jewish wives were divorced to make these foreign marriages; but that marrying within the nation was like a wife provided by God himself for each Israelite: to marry abroad was thus a sort of adultery). 4. A message to the people: they weary God with their impatience for the judgment: the Messenger of the Lord shall indeed come suddenly, but who may abide the judgment he brings? 5. A message to the whole nation: they are robbers of their God. Let them bring the whole tithe, and see whether this will not bring a blessing such as they will be unable to contain. 6. A message to the people: they are stout murmurers against God, crying that there is no profit in serving God, and that it is the wicked who are happy. But a Book of Remembrance is kept, and a day shall dawn which shall discern between the righteous and the wicked. 7. Conclusion. The original message of Moses (Deut., chapter XVIII:15) shall be fulfilled: Elijah the Prophet shall be sent to heal national disunion before the great and terrible day comes.”

Thus the Messenger rebukes their lack of faith and faithfulness, and foretells the coming of days that shall burn as a

furnace when the wicked shall be as stubble, "and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of hosts." Then the prophecy concludes with comforting assurance that the purpose of God shall be accomplished. And the sacred volume closes with the beautiful prediction:

"But unto you that fear my name shall the sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings."

## CHAPTER XIX

### THE DISCIPLINE OF PROVIDENCE

*"Lord thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations."*

THE Law and the Prophets provided well for the instruction of the Priest Nation for their office.

But instruction alone was not sufficient to prepare them for their work. In addition to the teaching that could be given by the words of prophecy, by precepts and laws and sacred ordinances, there was needed the informing discipline of active experience. Truth in abstract forms, in general statements, however excellent such forms may be, is not effective till it is impressed and illustrated in some concrete examples that touch our experience. The wisdom of Moses and the eloquence of the prophets were supplemented, and enforced by all the history of Israel; and that history is an important one of the "divers manners" in which "God spake to the Fathers," and the record of it is a part of the great revelation that comes to us from that ancient people.

Even aside from all that is miraculous in Israel's history, it is the most remarkable story ever written. Judged merely by the outcome, by the influence exerted on the modern world, no other history is equal to it, and only that of Greece and Rome are comparable with it.

Believing as we do, that in this history we have gradual unfolding of God's purpose, the working out in fact what He ordained should be, we have the joy of "thinking God's thoughts after him," and from his providential dealings with this nation learn much of his gracious will.

The philosophic problem, how God is sovereign and yet man

free, may or may not interest us; but we can hardly fail to be attracted by the actual outworking of His eternal purpose by the free activities of man. It is not prophecy but history that is amazing. We find that, somehow, that which was foreshadowed by the ritual, and declared by prophecy to be God's purpose, has been actually brought to pass without constraining human freedom, or doing violence to man's instincts or reason. God has wrought his own design, and yet left man untrammelled and unbound.

The task of the true historian is much more than that of telling the story of events. He must go back of actual facts and tell the causes which produced the facts. He must, so far as possible, discover the motives and incentives, the purposes and the intentions which led to the deeds of which he tells.

No power can work without occasion. No deed can be done without fit opportunity, and no result can be achieved without coordination of the various causes and occasions capable of such results.

It is this coordination that is of chief importance. The component parts of a machine are not often marvelous or novel, but the combination, in which each part coordinates with every other to accomplish some definite result, evokes our admiration. So the activities of men are interesting and instructive in proportion to the view we get of their relations, of their coordination for results.

It is in this fitting together of the various forces, time and place and other circumstances that are beyond control of men, that we find most of that element of providence—foreseeing—which, if it be at all, must be divine, for it is beyond all human reach. If we find evidence in history that over many ages, and by many hands, things have come to pass in such a way as to consistently work out an orderly and definite purpose, we are warranted in the conclusion that events were guided by intelligence and foresight. If this purpose was beyond the power of

man to form, or if we know that men did not consciously have such a purpose, and yet it worked out with all its parts coördinating, its times and places and events, its workers and their tools, its actors and their parts all falling out in due and proper order, we conclude with confidence that there was a plan and purpose, an aim and an intention back of it. We believe that God has such a plan, that "nothing walks with aimless feet," that through the tedious ages of the earth's long history, all things are working toward a worthy goal, evolving that eternal purpose which God involved in his created universe.

Thus we regard the evolution of the natural world, and thus we should expect to find the world of moral and of spiritual things, and in both fields of study the evidence is found in history.

Do we find order and coordination in the realm of nature? the biologist and chemist and psychologist and all the rest say, yes. We can trace the history of things far back, and as we read the record of the rocks and the testimony of all science, we find a clear and wonderful story of order and coordination and progress in obedience to law. So in history we find the same cooperation and harmonious progress of distinct and independent persons, nations and peoples working out a definite result. If we find not only such continuity and coordination, but also find that the results arrived at after turbulent and tedious ages is just what the sacred ritual had foreshadowed and the prophets had foretold, we cannot escape the conviction that the course of history has not been aimless, but divinely guided to accomplish a purpose, to fulfill a program, which God prepared from the beginning.

This is indeed the test which Moses prescribed for judging the validity of prophecy. "When a prophet speaketh in the name of the Lord if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the Lord hath not spoken." By this test of history, prophecy must stand or fall.

The history of Israel before the advent may be conveniently divided into seven epochs, viz 1. The period of Egyptian bondage. 2. The wandering in the desert. 3. The conquest of Canaan. 4. The kingdom. 5. The Great Captivity. 6. The Restoration. 7. The period of silent waiting.

In each of these we find accomplished certain definite results, each built upon the past, and preparing for the next in order; like the evolution of the world itself, this history moves grandly on through tedious centuries and varied scenes, through doubt and difficulty, with progress now and retrogression at other times, with mingled hopes and fears, and tears and joys, the great religious drama is enacted, the gracious program of the world's redemption is performed.

#### IN THE HOUSE OF BONDAGE

*"Again they are minished and bowed down through oppression, trouble, and sorrow."*

The bondage of Israel in Egypt was no doubt a bitter experience. It probably began with very moderate oppression, such as the imposition of labor on such public works as the kings were engaged in executing—building temples, tombs or monuments. These impositions gradually increased until at last the people were practically slaves, whose labor was unrequited, and whose very children were destroyed before their eyes. It must have been a maddening experience to those whose fathers had enjoyed the free and open life of the pasture lands of Canaan. But it accomplished two great results which could hardly have been reached by any other means. It bound the children of Israel together in the bonds of common suffering; they were segregated from the Egyptians by the impassable barriers of caste and social rank, and therefore less contaminated with the false religion and the vices of their masters. These hard conditions made

them willing—though with some misgivings—to take the risk of leaving Egypt under the leadership of Moses.

By the terrible discipline of Egyptian oppression they were fused together as a nation, and learned some lessons of obedience which made it possible for Moses and their elders to organize and lead them.

Moreover, "It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth", and it is no less an efficacious discipline for a nation, for while oppression may rob a people of some valuable traits, it develops patience, industry and humility, which are perhaps worth the price they cost.

The riddle of Samson is after all, the riddle of life, "Out of the eater came forth meat, out of the strong came sweetness." Out of the destructive and terrible experiences of our lives we very often draw the most effective and ennobling qualities of soul. It is indeed a matter of frequent remark, that the heroes of the world are mostly the product of what we, most unwisely, call unfavorable circumstances; and the sweetest flowers of humanity grow in the vales of tears.

#### IN THE WILDERNESS

The forty years of wandering in the wilderness was effective in developing some other qualities that were essential to their fitness for their destined office as the Priest of the world. The very qualities that were undeveloped, dwarfed and atrophied, by their slavery were best restored and developed by their free life in the wilderness. They were cowardly and dared not go up against the Canaanites; they were childish, whimpering and complaining like peevish children because of the hardships of the way of the wilderness; they were physically weak as all oppressed and illfed races are. Forty years in the wilderness produced a whole new generation, born and bred in the wilderness, hardened in body, self reliant in mind, ambitious in spirit, a sturdy and courageous people fit and eager for their strenuous



tasks. Their moral, spiritual and social training also had been conducted under the best drill master that the world has ever known, and Moses neither spared the rod nor stinted just rebuke to bring the people up to his high ideal of well rounded manhood.

We have no certain record of their attainment; but it seems probable that Israel at the time of Moses' death, just before they entered Canaan, reached the highest moral excellence that they ever attained. It is also probable that the service of the tabernacle and all the means of grace ordained by Moses were more carefully observed at that time than at any time after they had settled in the land of promise.

On the whole, the nation that gathered on the bank of Jordan under Joshua, eager to be led across the river, was a very different people from that which forty years before had slunk back to the wilderness; whimpering for the flesh pots of Egypt and murmuring against their noble leader. They have learned much, forgotten much, experienced much, and profited immensely by it all.

They passed the childish period and, to a good degree, are ready to put away childish things.

#### THE CONQUEST OF CANAAN

The prophet Hosea speaks of the period of Israel in Egypt and in the wilderness as the childhood of the nation. "When Israel was a child then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt." "I took them in my arms," "I drew them with the cords of a man, with the bands of love." The figure is most fit; for God's dealing with them was continually marked by the tender patience and loving care of a father for his little child. Moses was the ideal pedagogue and Joshua a model tutor.

But Israel was to be a man, and to do a man's work in the world. Between childhood and manhood lies the period of boyhood. The period of the conquest—of the judges, was Israel's

boyhood.

The nation has outgrown the need of such nursing and carrying in arms as they enjoyed from Moses. They must learn to walk alone, to choose their path and cultivate self control. This is no easy task, nor one to be performed successfully without considerable experience. The period of boyhood is the period of mistakes, of inconsistencies of changing plans and headstrong follies, not unmixed with generous impulses and heroic endeavor. These characteristics are precisely those of Israel during the period from Moses to Saul—from the wilderness to the kingdom.

The splendid training of Moses and Joshua had brought them to a high degree of order and efficiency. The wars of conquest kept them well drilled in habits of obedience and service; so that, for a generation or two, they seem to have retained their moral tone and fervent zeal. But when the storm and stress of war relaxed, and the pressure of necessity abated, they began to rapidly decline.

The lack of any strong authority or central government gave occasion for laxity and lawlessness, and, because there was no king in Israel, and every man did as he pleased, there was much disorder and the people were demoralized. They failed to complete the work of conquest and turned to their own affairs; so that the nations whom they had but partly dispossessed made wars, and harassed them continually. They fell away from the service of Jehovah's worship and often relapsed to gross idolatry. They grew indifferent to the splendid code of laws ordained by Moses, and violence and disorder spread throughout the land.

The interesting stories of the book of Judges gives a vivid picture of the times. The exploits of Samson and Abimelech and Gideon (Judges VI-X), exhibit to us the turbulent and boisterous character of the time, while the horrible story of "that night in Gibeah" (Judges XIX-XX) shows the darker side of the picture; relieved, to some degree, by the prompt and sum-

mary justice meted out by the people, aroused by the shame and outrage of such crime in Israel.

The story of Micah and his priest (Judges xviii) gives probably the best picture of the incongruous mixture of religious zeal and heathen superstition.

Micah was religious, after his own fashion, sparing no expense or trouble to have the proper equipment for worship and religious service. He was eclectic, he provided a good outfit of idols in accordance with the customs of the heathen but, at the same time, employs a priest of the tribe of Levi, consecrated to the service of Jehovah; and, having thus set his sails to catch all winds, congratulates himself, "Now I know that the Lord will do me good, seeing that I have a Levite to my priest."

The smug complacency of Micah is amusing, but it is none the less a very fair and vivid illustration of the mixed and incongruous character of the whole state of society. The whole nation is demoralized, the social order is unsettled, and the moral and religious life chaotic; in some respects it is utterly barbarous, but in others, it retains a good degree of the excellence attained under the leadership of Moses. The state of Israel was indeed very much that of a lawless, impulsive and self-willed boyhood. It was a people in the process of development; a nation finding itself; the raw material out of which the priest of the world was to be made.

#### THE KINGDOM

The period of the judges extended from the death of Joshua to the coronation of Saul—about 350 years. It was for the most part a turbulent and troubled time, full of petty wars and much disorder, but withal an epoch of great importance, which had in it much more of quiet and healthy progress than may appear to the thoughtless reader of the records. Happy, it is said, is the land that has no history, and we may observe that the periods of which nothing is written were for the most part the

important periods. The times of war and disorder were frequent enough, but between them were considerable times of quiet, and of progress in the arts of peace. From time to time there arose men who, by their force of character and natural gifts, became leaders of the people; and without any formal or official position, became the real rulers of the nations. They were known as judges; but their function seemed to have been rather that of chiefs, or heads of tribes. They were of varied types, and won their position by many different qualities. Samson, for example, by his marvelous physical strength and prowess; Gideon by his patriotic zeal and strategy, and Samuel by his piety and wisdom.

Under such intermittent leadership, the nation made but little progress, and were in fact losing ground both morally and politically and the need of a more perfect union, and more settled order, became apparent to the people; and the demand for "a king like all the nations" became insistent.

Samuel, at that time the head of the nation, opposed this demand, and urged the people to return to the more theocratic form of social order, as in the days of Moses; but the popular demand was stronger than his influence, so that he reluctantly yielded, and with his own hand anointed Saul to be their king.

The establishing of the monarchical form of government marks the beginning of a new epoch in their history. The incident of the people organizing a government, choosing the form of it, and instituting it against the protest of their greatest leader, is a very interesting bit of history; and the tact and magnanimity of Samuel in cordially acquiescing in their choice, and generously laboring with all his might to make the best of what he regarded as a mistaken policy—the whole story indeed shows Samuel to have been a man of very superior and noble character.

#### SAUL

Saul is one of the pathetic characters of history. He is introduced to us "a choice young man and goodly; and there was

not among the children of Israel a goodlier person than he; from his shoulders and upwards he was higher than any of the people."

His unsought promotion to the throne, his profound perturbation of mind on account of his own responsibilities, and his brave attempt to perform the Herculean task of breaking the Philistine's yoke from the neck of Israel, and of restoring order, and organizing a stabler government, all these commend him to our admiration and enlist our sympathy.

When we consider the tremendous difficulties under which he labored—a king without power to enforce his commands, a warrior without an army, with a mere handful of soldiers, without so much as a sword or spear, an enemy well armed and accustomed to victory, a people cowed and despondent—it is no wonder that his mind became unsettled, and an evil spirit led him to violent outbreaks of temper, and fits of anger that were little less than madness.

In spite of all this handicap, he achieved remarkable success. His personal courage, his patience and persistence, his self sacrifice and his really brilliant generalship entitle him to very great respect and high military honor.

And, while we recognize the justice of Samuel's criticism in the affairs of the Amelakites, (I Samuel xv) our heart goes out in sympathy to the brave old king who after forty years of faithful and unselfish toil for his people, is defeated and broken hearted, and, despairing, falls on his own sword and dies with his three sons on the stricken field of Mt. Gilboa. It is with great pleasure that we read the brief story of the heroic devotion of his followers—there is, in fact, no finer gem of historic narrative than these three verses with which the first Book of Samuel ends; "And when the inhabitants of Jabesh-Gilead heard of that which the Philistines had done to Saul; all the valiant men arose, and went all night, and took the body of Saul and the bodies of his sons from the wall of Beth-shan, and came to Jabesh and

burnt them there; and they took their bones and buried them under a tree at Jabesh and fasted seven days."

He was worthy of the honor; for, with all his faults, he was a kingly man. And David never gave a more conclusive proof of his own royal character than in his tender lamentation over the death of Saul and Jonathan.

"Thy glory, O Israel is slain upon thy high places!

How are the mighty fallen!

Tell it not in Gath,

Publish it not in the streets of Ashkelou,

Lest the daughters of the Philistines rejoice,

Lest the daughters of the uncircumcised triumph

Ye mountains of Gilboa,

Let there be no dew nor rain upon you, neither fields of offering:

For there the shield of the mighty was vilely cast away,

The shield of Saul, as one not anointed. . . .

Saul and Jonathan were lovely, and pleasant in their lives,

And in their death they were not divided:

They were swifter than eagles

They were stronger than lions.

Ye daughters of Israel, weep over Saul,

Who clothed you in scarlet, delicately,

Who put ornaments of gold upon your apparel.

How are the mighty fallen in the midst of battle!

Jonathan is slain upon thy high places.

I am distressed for thee, my brother Jonathan:

Very pleasant hast thou been to me:

Thy love to me was wonderful.

Passing the love of women.

How are the mighty fallen

And the weapons of war perished!—II Samuel 1:19-27

## CHAPTER XX

### DAVID

**B**Y FAR the greatest of all Israel's kings was David. He is indeed the one of all their heroes to whom the title, great, peculiarly belongs.

Many of their leaders were superior to him in one or another excellence, but none bulked quite so large, or loomed so high, or filled so large a place of varied eminence as he.

Moses or Elijah or Isaiah shone, like stars, in the firmament of heaven, so high they seem to move above the plane of common men. But David is so intensely human, so much a part of this mundane sphere, with its dusty conflicts, its passion and its pains, that we understand him better, and more easily appraise his worth.

He stands as a great land mark in the history of Israel; like some great mountain peak that in height and grandeur dominates the landscape; not all beautiful, not all good, but vast, majestic and impressive, and, on the whole, standing in the sunshine of God's approbation, though sometimes very ugly clouds shut out the favor of God and the respect of men.

Like all men who attain to greatness, David owed much to circumstances that were not at all of his disposing. His boyhood was spent in the open. As the shepherd of his father's flock on the hills of Bethlehem, he found the best environment and the most effective discipline that his time and country could provide. Occupation, responsibility, and leisure happily proportioned are the best possible curriculum for the devolpment of manhood; and when these can be found in the open country, and associated with the joys of home and the kindly discipline of loving parents, there is nothing lacking in the equipment for the training of a

boy. The influence of this occupation is abundantly shown in his whole life, and the fact that they are so carefully noted in the inspired narrative indicates the importance which the author attached to them. The qualities and accomplishments which first brought him into notice were all acquired in this school of his boyhood days. His pleasing countenance, his frank but modest bearing, his physical strength and courage are valuable capital for any young man to start in business with. His musical ability and his skill on the harp and with the sling were the occasion of his coming into notice; and both are typical of the man. He plays, as any shepherd might play, but with such mastery of his art, that, when the occasion came, it found him ready, and he is invited to play before the king. He threw stones as any shepherd boy, but so as to acquire such skill that, when the occasion came, he was able to stake his own life and the honor of his nation on the single throw of a stone from the brook.

When he came to the throne he had already experienced the vicissitudes of a soldier's life, was in fact almost a veteran in the kind of warfare he had to wage for many years thereafter.

The prowess of Saul had broken the force of the Philistine oppression, and though he left the work of liberating Israel unfinished, he had made it possible for David to push the task to its completion. The nation under Saul's brave leadership had become more spirited, more determined to cast off the yoke of oppression, and in this determination were more solidified as a nation than they had been since the days of Joshua.

These circumstances made it possible to establish the nation on a firm basis, but they fell far short of making it easy. They gave David a "fighting chance," but they did not imply that his success was not greatly to his credit. It is possible that a much smaller man might have delivered Israel from the Philistines, but that liberation was only the beginning of David's great achievements. "To form a more perfect union, to establish justice, provide for the common defense and to promote the



general welfare" was only a part of his task. In addition to these, he accomplished other works of even greater magnitude. He established the dignity of his court; he formed alliances with other nations; he made Jerusalem a splendid capital; he fostered commerce and encouraged useful handicrafts. In addition to these enterprises of a political character, he accomplished other and greater works, such as the promotion of arts and sciences and the development of music and poetry. He won the love of his people and the respect of his enemies. In the breadth and variety of his labors he is probably without a peer, and in the quality of his achievements he has hardly a rival. Other kings have won renown in one or other of these fields, but none cut so wide a swath, or did so many things so well.

But the greatest work of his life, and that in which we are interested here, was his contribution to the religious development of the nation, his part in the preparation of Israel for his office as the priest of the world.

In general we may say he restored the order of religion and enriched its service. His bringing up of the ark of God and establishing the sanctuary on Mt. Zion was typical of his life work in religion. He found the whole service in disorder. Eli's sons had disgraced their father's name, and profaned the sacred office; and, even under Samuel, the people did not regain their reverence for the hallowed ordinances; and during the reign of Saul things went from bad to worse.

David's first care was to purify the service, to purge the priesthood and establish rigid discipline within their ranks. Then as occasion offered, he dignified the service and enriched it by the arts of music and appropriate ritual, till it became a solemn and impressive means of religious education, edifying and inspiring; yet restrained from the spectacular extremes, to which an elaborate ritual is apt to run.

But it is in the Psalms that we have the best expression of the religious ideals of David. It is not certain how many, or which,

of the Psalms are of David's authorship; but it is generally agreed that the prevailing tone of Hebrew worship as established in the Book of Psalms is of David's time, and largely due to his direction and example.

Such psalms as the 23rd and 24th, the 31st and 51st and 40th are to this day the high water mark of devotional poetry. A nation that had attained to such conceptions of divine character, and religious truth was already far advanced beyond anything the heathen world had ever attained before that time, or since.

It would take too long to illustrate this proposition here, as we hope to do hereafter. Our present interest is with history; and we are all sufficiently acquainted with the psalms to judge by them of the religious aspirations and ideals to which the people had attained in David's time, and by his help. It is not to be supposed that all the people had attained to such a high degree of religious culture; but the service that was filled with such lofty sentiments, and set before the worshiper such high ideals of spiritual life, must have had tremendous influence; and the response of the people to the hopes thus set before them proves their progress in religious life.

It is remarkable that, notwithstanding the great revelations made in all the ages since that time, by prophets and apostles and by our Lord himself, yet the highest and profoundest of our religious aspirations still find their best expressions in the words of these ancient psalms of David. "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want" is still the sweetest song in all our hymnal; and the 25th psalm, beginning with the words "Unto Thee O Lord do I lift up my soul," needs no revision to fit it for the use of Christian church. It is right and proper that the Jewish people have ever regarded David as the typical king, the father of their church, and with Abraham and Moses the greatest of their race.

It is true that Saul's heart-breaking task was necessary as a

preparation, without which David could not have done his work. But take him all in all—with all his faults and crimes—he was all that the eulogies of his posterity has represented him to be “The man who was raised up on high. The anointed of the God of Jacob, and the sweet psalmist of Israel.”

The Messiah’s title “Son of David,” denotes much more than a mere fact of genealogy. He was in very fact the direct successor of the great king who did so much to prepare the nation for their office as the priest of the world.

### SOLOMON

Under David, Israel reached its full maturity. It is now a nation, fully organized and well developed in all the features which mark the Hebrew race down to the present day. Solomon succeeded to a throne of splendid opportunity. For nearly thirty centuries the name of Solomon has been a synonym for wisdom, and his reign the type of kingly glory. So well established is his reputation, that it seems almost sacrilege to question his title to the highest kind of wisdom. It is, indeed, unquestioned that he had, in very unusual measure, that shrewd insight into the obscure depths of things, and that instinctive genius for practical judgment that is very properly called wisdom, though it is not the highest kind of wisdom. His ambition was practical, but it was not lofty. His prayer, when God asked him to choose what he should give him, was “give thy servant an understanding heart to judge the people”; a good prayer, certainly, and abundantly granted; but, for all that, in height and breadth and greatness of soul, he did not even approach the stature of his father David.

His whole conception of life was on a lower plane, his glory is of a more material sort, his religion more external, and his influence entirely worldly.

His reign was indeed remarkable for peace and prosperity;

but that peace was chiefly owing to the military genius of his father, who had won the respect of neighboring nations by the valor of his sword; and that prosperity was largely due the location of Israel at "the cross roads of the commercial world," so that they could lay heavy tribute on all the commerce that passed from Egypt to the East and from the Mesopotamian valley to the Mediterranean coasts. He built the temple, for which his father had provided all the material. He extended the trade lines, which his father had opened; and he strengthened the alliances which David had formed. He was, in brief, the successful builder on the broad and firm foundations which he found already laid. In all this he showed wisdom, energy and tact.

But when we look more closely at the *man*, we find but little to attract our admiration or to entitle him to such high honor as we feel constrained to ascribe to his illustrious father.

He was magnificent, but not magnanimous. He was shrewd, but hardly great. He was a great mind, but a mediocre soul.

His glory was brilliant, but a trifle too spectacular. His great prayer at the dedication of the temple ranks higher in rhetorical beauty than in religious fervor, and his proverbs are on a much lower plane than the psalms of David.

In the political history of Israel, Solomon has a large place; in their commercial history, he is still more preeminent; but in their religious history he counted for but little, and that little almost wholly adverse to their true prosperity. His work appeals more strongly to the artist than to the saint, and his influence is more easily traced to Wall Street than to Galilee.

With, no doubt, the best intentions, he made the religion of Israel an aesthetic cult, and unwittingly fostered that devotion to externals, which became the bane of their religious life. On the whole the reign of Solomon was influential in advancing Israel in the arts of civilization, in the culture and intelligence that were necessary to their preparation for their office, but

it was not favorable to their growth in spiritual grace. The whole drift and tendency of the time was secular, material, mundane.

From this time the religious life of the nation was more and more widely separated from their political life. The theocratic features disappeared from their constitution, and their kings, for the most part, counted for nothing in their religious life.

Solomon's son and successor is easily classified as the spoiled child of an illustrious father. He inherited neither the wisdom of his father nor the character of his grandfather. His headstrong arrogance and tactless folly drove his people to revolt, and Jereboam—a shrewd and energetic demagogue—was followed by ten tribes in establishing a rival kingdom. Thus the brilliant reign of Solomon failed to maintain the union which David had established; and the glory of his day was followed by the storm and darkness of civil war, and the rending of his kingdom.

The history of the rival kingdoms for the next four hundred years is dreary reading. Few of their kings in either nation rose above the uninteresting level of dull mediocrity, and the few that had some higher ambitions were baffled by the sullen indifference of the people; or, if they succeeded in restoring something of the national integrity, left it to be destroyed by their successors. There is really nothing in their political life of these four hundred years of any importance in their religious development. Of all the epochs of their history this is the most difficult to interpret. In most of their experience it is comparatively easy to discover, as we look back upon it, how God was working out his purpose, and training the nation for their office of priest, by which they should bless the world. But during this long period they seem to be standing still, or merely marking time, while the great world toils on under its heavy burdens of sin and misery, its awful need of a Savior all the more pitiful because the world was all unconscious of its need. It is not surprising that

many zealous souls, who had hoped for the great deliverance, grew weary with the long delay, and hope deferred had made them sick at heart, till they concluded that their God had utterly forsaken Israel, and given over his purpose to save the world through them. It took strong faith to stand the strain of that weary waiting, and to hope on from age to age that God would, in his own good time, fulfill his promise. But such faith was found in every age. Sometimes they were but a few—a remnant—who still waited on the altar and kept the lamp of hope alight.

From this faithful remnant came the great prophets. They were all the product of the doleful ages. "They that are whole need not a physician" and God sent no great prophet in the prosperous days of David or Solomon; but in the dark days when the way was most obscure, when the sun was clouded and the storm beat wildly, then God gave songs of hope and gladness. Then the seraphic voice of great Isaiah rang out with those sublime and heavenly anthems of deliverance to come. Jeremiah also chants his sweet pathetic elegies, "Weeping day and night for the slain of his people," but his faith in the destiny of Israel gave no sign of fainting, and his hope showed never a withered leaf. Hear him, when things were at their worst, "Thus saith the Lord who giveth the sun for a light by day and the ordinances of the moon and of the stars for a light by night, that stirreth up the sea that the waves thereof roar; the Lord of Hosts is his name. If these ordinances depart from before me, saith the Lord, then the seed of Israel also shall cease from being a nation." (Jer. xxxi:35-36); or this "For I am with thee saith the Lord, to save thee; though I make a full end of all the nations whither I have scattered thee, yet will I not make a full end of thee, but I will correct thee in measure and will not leave thee altogether unpunished." (Jer. xxx:11).

It is such men as these that held fast the ancient promises, and looked forward with undaunted hope to the glorious day to dawn

on Israel and the world.

To these prophets we must turn if we would know the real history of Israel. It is they who voiced the religious life of the people, expressed the national ideals, and forecast its destiny.

Their place in history must be noticed that we may understand their messages.

## CHAPTER XXI

### THE CAPTIVITY

*"How is the gold become dim!  
How is the most pure gold changed!"*

**A**BOUT 400 years after the death of David and 600 years before the birth of Jesus—King David's Greater Son, the Hebrew nation was carried captive to the land of Babylon, and after seventy years returned to their own land and reestablished their national life.

Such an event is probably unique in history. I, at least, know not another instance of a national life suspended for two whole generations and then revived and rehabilitated.

However this may be, the captivity of Judah was one of the greatest events of history. Like most events of real importance, its significance was not apparent at the time.

To that distressed and broken hearted caravan that crept out of their city gate and took their weary way across the desert to a life of exile and oppression nothing could have seemed more sad, no fate more terrible, no prospect more devoid of hope. Yet in the retrospect we see the good fruit of that tearful sowing, and the brighter luster from that dark eclipse of their national life.

It is an epoch that will repay our study. It is of interest because it is unusual, and full of pathos. It is important because it is a part of our own history; for by this road—this *via dolorosa*—came our gospel, and it is instructive because it is a luminous example of the ways of God with man. It is a copy in large type of lessons written small in every human life.

There are three points of view from which it may be studied.



First, as a political event. It is a simple story. The great world powers of that day were Babylon and Egypt. These were rivals. For more than a thousand years their wars and jealousies were the chief events of history, and all the world of that day gravitated either to the Euphrates or the Nile.

Israel was small and insignificant, but its location gave it an importance out of all proportion to its size. It lay at the cross-roads of the world. Commerce and armies passing from Babylon to Egypt must needs cross the land of Israel, and from their rugged hills they could greatly help or hinder whom they would.

If you look at the map you will appreciate how this little land between the desert and the sea was the only path by which these rival powers could approach each other.

From the beginning of their history their prophets and their constitution had stood consistently for strict neutrality. All the greater prophets cried out against alliances with any nations.

But as the nation became more fully organized, as her kings assumed more of the pretensions and the prerogatives of kingship, the tendency to form alliances, take sides, and thus become involved in international affairs became too strong to be resisted. Egypt was the nearer, more familiar and more closely bound by old associations, and, in spite of the prophetic warnings, Israel became the ally of Egypt and the enemy of Babylon.

Now it happened in the days of which we speak, while a series of weak and wicked kings ruled in Jerusalem, there arose in Babylon one of the greatest kings that ever reigned, Nebuchadnezzar the Great.

His campaigns resulted in the conquest of Tyre and the subjugation of the land of Israel, but Israel, still clinging to the delusive hope of help from Egypt, rebelled again and again, till Nebuchadnezzar lost all patience and carried them away to Babylon, and reduced Jerusalem to ashes. Such is the story of the captivity from the view point of mere political affairs. It is simple, ordinary, insignificant.

It was not miraculous. It was scarcely remarkable. It was but a commonplace story of a third class nation.

But Israel's importance was not political but moral. His office in the world was spiritual. He was definitely called **and** consecrated as the priest nation of the world.

What the priest is to other men Israel was to other nations—the teacher of religion; the minister of spiritual things; the revealer of divine mysteries, and the custodian of the oracles of God.

Our Lord spoke simply history when he remarked that “Salvation is of the Jews.”

But the historic fact that Israel *was* the priest of the world is not the important point; but that they were *ordained beforehand* for that high office. It is of some interest that this little nation should have been the teacher of the world in spiritual things, but it is infinitely more important that in this office they were carrying out a plan, performing a duty, accomplishing a task assigned to them by God; and followed a program published by the prophets of Jehovah ages before the time of its performance.

When God gave Abraham that threefold promise. “I will bless thee. I will bless thy seed, and in thee and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed,” he published the prospectus of the greatest enterprise the world has ever known. This promise was the high commission of the Hebrew race. It was their call to holy orders. It was their ordination to the duties and responsibilities, the rights and privileges of their sacred calling.

It was the pledge and guarantee of such instruction, discipline and providential government as might be needed for the proper exercise of their high office.

We may not now review the history of Israel,—nor is it necessary. You know their checkered career. From Abraham to Moses, from Joshua to Samuel and from David to St. Paul

the eternal purpose patiently pursues its course. Replete with human interest, bedecked with human tears, and stained with human sin, a stiffnecked and rebellious race, a froward and ungrateful people. Yet on the whole attaining higher morals, sweeter manners, purer laws and nobler modes of life than the world had ever known before. So frankly human, yet working out a purpose so divine.

A Nation flecked with every frailty, stained with every sin, yet glorious with heroes and splendid with saints.

Like a river with its rolling flood that gathers mud and drift and various debris and yet pursues its course down to the sea, so Israel with its tumultuous and tortuous course winds somehow to its goal.

In the age of the captivity the state of Israel was very low indeed. His kings with few exceptions were a worthless lot. His prophets for the most part false and venal. The people ignorant and immoral. What terrible indictments Jeremiah fulminates against them.

"They will deceive every one his neighbor, they will not speak the truth. They have taught their tongues to speak lies, they weary themselves to commit iniquity." The dreadful ruin of the nation's morals, their utter failure to perform the sacred office grieves him most of all. It is this moral defection, not their material ruin, that called forth those sublime elegies of the Book of Lamentation that touch the highest summits of poetic eloquence.

"How is the gold become dim, and the most fine gold changed, and the stones of the sanctuary are poured out at the top of every street.

The precious sons of Zion comparable to fine gold how are they esteemed as earthen pitchers the work of the hands of the potter. Her nobles were purer than snow, they were whiter than milk; they were more ruddy in body than rubies, they were polished like sapphires; now their visage is blacker than a coal,

they are not known in the streets, their skin cleaveth to their bones it is withered, it is become like a stick."

And so, with dirge and lamentation he bemoans their low estate.

But there is still hope for a nation that can produce a Jeremiah. No people are utterly bad that can respond to such a call as his.

There was indeed a faithful remnant, a precious seed; but as a whole, the nation Israel was hopeless, and nothing short of dissolution could eradicate her vices. When a garment is too vile for washing we put it in the fire. So God poured out his fury upon Israel, and Jerusalem was destroyed.

But yet in judgment God remembered mercy; not as an afterthought, not as a kind of relenting from the severity of his wrath, but quite the opposite of that. He remembered mercy as the purpose of his judgment. He destroyed that he might preserve.

As in the days of Noah when he saved eight souls "by water"—not from water as we too often construe it—but by the flood he saved the remnant of a righteous seed, and by them gave humanity another lease of life.

So in the capacity, they that "went forth with weeping bearing precious seed, came again with rejoicing bringing their sheaves with them."

"The Lord doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men, but whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth."

Much went down with the fall of Jerusalem that never arose again. Their effete line of petty kings with their pomp and pride, with their entangling alliances, and their half hearted and spasmodic loyalty to Jehovah God of Israel, these were blotted out.

The worship of Baal and Ashteroth of Moloch and Chemosh, that strange delusion of idolatry, which, like a vice of the blood,

broke out from time to time since they came out of Egypt, was thoroughly purged and never appeared again in the reconstructed nation.

In other ways which might be mentioned the captivity purged the nation of many an ancient fault of morals, error of faith and defect of ideal.

But deeper and more radical than these was the discipline of their experience in preparing them for their mission as a blessing to all nations—their calling as priest nation of the world.

The article of the creed which the Hebrew race has found most difficult to learn is belief in the holy Catholic church. Holiness they could understand but catholicity they did not know.

A chosen race, a peculiar people, a holy nation they appreciated; but the higher honor, the greater glory of service, of sacrifice, of spreading a gospel world-wide and universal, they could not reach nor apprehend.

The spirit of him who came not to be ministered unto but to minister was too high for them. They literally had no word for catholicity, for they had never really grasped the thought.

Failing to get this idea, they failed in the qualifications most essential to their priestly office. Unless their view could be somehow broadened, unless they could somehow be shaken out of their smug self satisfaction and their indifference to the world's great need, they were but cumberers of the ground and ought to be cut off.

So God drove them out, and forced them into contact with the world. In Babylon they were flung into the very vortex of the world's activities. They saw life from a new angle, and realized the common needs of the human race.

There is perhaps no more pathetic incident in history than their captivity, certainly none was ever so sweetly sung by poet as was this in the pathetic tender lines of their song of the Exile. (Ps. 137).

"By the rivers of Babylon there we sat down; yea, we wept

when we remembered Zion."

Pathetic, certainly, yet hardly sad. A people that cherished such devotion to a worthy past are pretty certain of a worthy future.

It hardly needed a prophet—a philosopher might seem to suffice to predict that a people who could sing "If I forget thee O Jerusalem let my right hand forget her cunning, etc.," would, sooner or later, sing "When the Lord turned again the captivity of Zion, we were like them that dream.

Then was our mouth filled with laughter and our tongues with singing. Then said they among the heathen, The Lord hath done great things for them.

The Lord hath done great things for us; whereof we are glad.

They that sow in tears shall reap in joy. He that goeth forth bearing precious seed shall doubtless come again with rejoicing bringing his sheaves with him."

There were long and weary centuries from the captivity to the nativity of Christ, a long and weary way from Babylon to Bethlehem; and faith sometimes grew weak and hope grew dim, and there were many who said "Who will show us any good." But there were also some who looked for the consolation of Israel, and when fullness of the time was come, there was a remnant still who watched and waited, holding fast the hope that God, in his own good time, would visit and redeem his people; and keep the ancient promise that they should be a blessing to all nations of the world.

Faith has many heroes of the Hebrew race from Abraham to Zacharias, but none were more illustrious than good old Simeon, who, after all the dolorous ages when hope deferred had made men sick at heart, when the glory of their nation had faded and decayed, could still sing the splendid "Nunc dimittis." "Lord now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: for mine eyes have seen thy salvation, which thou hast

prepared before the face of all people; a light to lighten the nations, and the glory of thy people, Israel."

Such was the late but worthy fruit of their discipline. Such was the harvest of the sheaves which the returning exiles brought back from their captivity. Well may the nations say "God hath done great things for them."

But is it not, what we have claimed, a luminous example of God's ways with men, a copy in large type of what is written small but plain in every life?

"I hold it true, with him who sings  
To one clear harp in divers tones,  
That men may rise on stepping stones  
Of their dead selves to higher things.

But who shall so forecast the years  
And find in loss a gain to match,  
Or reach thro' time a hand to catch  
The far off interest of tears."

Ah, this is our chief difficulty, our reach of faith is so pitifully short. We cannot reach through time. We must see the fruit before we even plant the seed. We complain when our own little hope is disappointed, and our little plans are broken. We are the children of a pampered age; we are the soft and tender plants of hothouse growth, we have little of the heroic in us. We dole out a slender pittance to bless the nations, we look on our glorious inheritance as a burden and a tax. We have but little joy in our office as the priest of the world, the custodian of the oracles of God.

Are we too approaching the point when God must say "I will correct thee, I will not leave thee unpunished?"

I do not pray that the church shall suffer persecution, but I cannot read the church's history without exclaiming, "O those times of persecution, what Christians they do make." They

have purified the church, they have exalted faith, they have made heroes out of saints who in an age like this would be but the least in the kingdom of heaven.

Persecution may not come in our day, but I have no doubt but it will come, for God loves the world too well to let it die. The gospel is too precious to be lost by our default.

However this may be, of this at least I am convinced, that God will not make a full end of his people, as he has made a full end of the nations wither they were scattered, for I read in scripture, and in the history of all the ages just what the poet well expresses.

“Truth forever on the scaffold;  
Wrong forever on the throne;  
But that scaffold sways the future;  
And behind the dim unknown  
Standeth God within the shadow  
Keeping watch above his own.”

And whether our captivity be national or personal we have the blessed promise “I am with thee, saith the Lord, to save thee.”



## CHAPTER XXII

### THE RESTORATION

*When the Lord turned again the Captivity of Zion, we were like unto them that dream.*

HERE is a certain peculiar attraction,—almost fascination about the beginning of any new scheme or enterprise. Our plans and specifications are drawn with a very freehand; our anticipations framed on such a generous scale. We propose the impossible, and delight to find that all difficulties can be made to disappear by the simple expedient of shutting our eyes. Castles in Spain have a completeness and perfection of detail that is charming; for we build them unhampered by the painful restrictions of time and place and opportunity, that are so annoying in actual building.

In many respects the reformer has an easier task than the original builder, he has seen at least certain things to avoid; he has learned by other men's failures in some respects how not to do it, and is apt to fancy that this gives him a complete guide how to do it.

It is but natural that the reformer or reorganizer should be optimistic, and as a rule he is so, and more. He not only hopes for success but feels sure of it.

“Hope springs eternal in the human breast;  
Man never is, but always to be blest.”

It is indeed fortunate for the world that this is so, for, if it were not, most of the great reforms that have blest the world would not have been undertaken.

Happily men do not always sit down and count the cost too closely: The spirit of great reformers holds such calculations in contempt, and the real hero scorns to count the cost of duty or of loyalty or truth.

When the seventy years of Israel's captivity were accomplished, according to the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah the prophet—"When God turned back the captivity of Zion, they were like men that dream.

Then was their mouth filled with laughter and their tongue with singing."

Their joy was the more "dreamlike" because their deliverance was accomplished almost without effort on their part, and their restoration to their own land was wholly providential.

There could not have been more than a very few of those who were carried away alive at the time of the restoration, though we read that there were some who remembered the old temple of Solomon present when the corner stone of the new temple was laid.

The strength of their national spirit is shown in the zeal and enthusiasm of the people over their migration to the land of their fathers, but which they had never seen.

Even before they returned they were occupied with plans and projects of rebuilding their cities and reorganizing their church and state.

Their "dreams" had already seen the holy city looming large and fair in the specious fields of their imagination; an ideal commonwealth and a new Jerusalem that should be the joy of the whole earth.

For the model of this new state they had the splendid visions of the earlier prophets, the inspired hopes of patriarchs and priests and seers. The promises of Abraham and Moses, of Isaiah and Jeremiah were strong to justify their hopes and fortify their faith.

The fine ideals of the zealous band who returned to Judah

and Jerusalem was manifested not only in the hopes voiced by their prophets, but also by the actual return of so many of them to the homes of their fathers, and by their energetic efforts to rebuild their cities and to reestablish the ordinances of divine worship.

During the seventy years of their captivity, they had established themselves in the countries whither they had been scattered and had followed the advice of Jeremiah—Jer. xxix:4-7—and had labored to be good citizens of the kingdom in which they dwelt. They had prospered; many of them had acquired wealth, and some had risen to distinction and official position, e. g. Nehemiah, Daniel and his friends.

The people who returned to Jerusalem under the edict of Cyrus were apparently in very comfortable circumstances; and their return was due to patriotic and religious zeal, rather than to material advantage. The whole movement seems to have been dominated by religious motives; and the conduct of Cyrus and the people of Babylon indicates a curious and widespread interest in the religion of Israel. The cordial good will of their neighbors whom they left in that land, and the gracious favor of King Cyrus are remarkable, and seem to indicate a special influence of God's spirit moving mightily upon the hearts of men to execute the gracious purposes of God for man; and when we consider this in connection with that striking prophecy concerning Cyrus—Is. XLIV:28—we are impressed with the truth, so often overlooked, that God is Lord of all the earth, all nations are his; and though Israel was his servant for a special and preeminent office, all nations are his servant, and He girds them for their tasks, though they know him not.

"I am the Lord and there is none else, no God beside me, I girded thee though thou hadst not known me." Is. XLV:5.

The return of the remnant of the chosen people and their rehabilitation as a nation marks the beginning of a new era in the history of our redemption. It was a new departure; a

fresh start toward the goal to which they had been directed by all the patriarchs and prophets since the days of Abraham.

But the conception of their office was much more liberal, their horizon broader and their ideal much more distinctly catholic than it had ever been before—perhaps not more catholic than had been Isaiah's splendid visions, or than Abraham's glorious hopes, but much more so than ever the people as a whole had apprehended or believed.

Their contact with the great world powers, their mingling with men of other races and of other faiths, had taught them many things; and had enabled them to appreciate their privileges, and impressed them with the infinite superiority of their religion over all that other nations had attained to.

In two respects especially they were immensely benefitted. First; they were cured of their old idolatry. They had seen idolatry at its best in Babylon, and had despised it; they saw its fruits and shrank with horror from the sight. Second; their conception of God was greatly purified and elevated. Before the captivity they had hardly risen to the conception of Jehovah as the God of all the earth. He was to them rather the God of Israel; superior indeed to the Gods of other nations, but, like them, limited in power and dominion; a God to be propitiated, bargained with, and even circumvented.

In their exile, separated as they were from the outward symbols of his presence, and deprived of the "machinery" of worship, on which their elaborate ritual had led them to depend, they learned to know God as a spirit, far above the limitations of an earthly sanctuary or the *forms* of worship; and though they are still faithful to the good means of grace prescribed by the law of Moses, and are very zealous in the reestablishment of the temple and its service, still they see more clearly than their fathers ever saw that all these services were but the *means* of grace, helpful and instructive, but by no means constituting their religion.

They have attained to nobler ideals, loftier hopes and truer notions of their office. And though they did not always cherish these ideals as they might have done, and often fell away from their high hopes, yet those hopes were never lost.

Through all the doleful centuries that dragged their weary length along from this time till the advent of our Lord, a faithful remnant kept the light of faith still burning, and cherished the eternal hope; so that, when the fulness of the time had come, there were not a few who, like Zacharias and Anna and Simeon, looked for the consolation of Israel.

In the restored and renovated church the blessed hope of blessing the world is seen again, more clearly than before, but in itself unchanged. Like the pole star shining ever in its place to guide the mariner in every sea, so the everlasting gospel shines "a light to lighten the nations and the glory of thy people Israel."

So moves the course of history, by slow and painful steps "To that far off divine event to which the whole creation moves."

## CHAPTER XXIII

### THE GREAT POETIC BOOKS

#### HEBREW POETRY

*"I will sing of Mercy and Judgment,  
Unto thee, O Lord, will I sing praises."*

**I**N the interview with one of the scribes who showed a good knowledge of religious truth, it is recorded that "When Jesus saw that he answered discreetly he said unto him, 'Thou art not far from the kingdom of God.'" This is as far as religious knowledge can bring us. It is necessary for this purpose. A certain amount of knowledge is required for the intelligent acceptance of the Gospel and the cultivation of virtue. But the mere knowledge of truth does not of itself bring us into harmony with God's will, nor produce in us the love of holiness. The essence of character is the affections. Tell me what you know, and I will tell you what you *can do*, but tell me what you *love* and I will tell you what you are, and what on the whole you *will do*; for the issues of life are out of the heart,—out of the emotions, sentiments, feelings or whatever you choose to call the states of mind which impel us to action.

We would expect, then, that when holy men spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost they would address themselves, not only to our intelligence, but to our feelings; that they would appeal to our affections and call forth our love and devotion, our loyalty and fidelity. Such expectation is not disappointed. The Holy Scriptures are rich beyond all other books in their appeals to our affections. Not those appeals to the superficial, transient feelings, which flame up like a fire of paper only to die out with little effect on character or conduct, but those appeals

based on knowledge, and moving the will.

The works of Creation and Providence, the inspired ritual and the prophetic discourses lay a broad and firm foundation for our faith, and on this basis the love of God is builded, and the sentiments of virtue reared. The Scriptures which appeal to our affections and stimulate our faith and hope and love are grounded on the knowledge already given in the law and prophets. Sometimes the feelings called forth by the knowledge of God's character or by his mighty works is expressed in immediate connection with the facts which call forth the feelings; as in the song of Miriam in celebration of the crossing of the Red Sea:

"I will sing unto the Lord for he hath triumphed gloriously. The horse and his rider he hath thrown into the sea. 'The Lord is my strength and my song and he is become my salvation.'"

And Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took a timbrel in her hand; and all the women went out after her with timbrels and dances. And Miriam answered them, "Sing ye to the Lord, for he is highly exalted. The horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea."

Or the pious sentiment may be evoked by the quiet meditation of some soul upon the goodness of God revealed in many ways; as in the twenty-third Psalm: "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures. . . . Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever."

We have these expressions of religious feeling, of joy and gratitude, of love and devotion, of hope and aspiration in almost every possible form, in every possible relation and circumstances, and in all ages; from the day when Israel went out of Egypt to the day when the infant Jesus was presented in the temple when the aged Simeon sang the *Nunc Dimittis*, "Now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace according to thy word. For mine eyes have seen thy salvation which thou hast prepared

before the face of all people. A light to lighten the Gentiles and the glory of thy people Israel."

The first remarkable feature of this form of revelation, this appeal to the emotional side of our nature, is the fact that it is almost always expressed in poetry, and in many cases accompanied by music.

It is a very interesting fact that poetry and music seem to be the natural language of the emotions. In all countries and in every age the voice of worship is a voice of song.

Just what it is that gives to poetry and music this peculiar affinity for our emotional states is a very interesting problem of psychology; but however we may explain it, the fact is obvious and familiar, love and joy and all the feelings of the soul are, and ever have been, best expressed in poetry and uttered forth in song.

The revelations of Scripture would be incomplete if they did not address themselves to our feelings as well as to our intelligence and will.

The commandments and ordinances expounded by the prophets, and illustrated by the ritual of worship give us the substance of religious truth—teach the doctrine concerning God and duty, but the response of the soul, the intimate and personal relation of the soul to God is given in the Psalms and other poems which holy men sang as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.

What light and color is to the landscape, or what fragrance is to the flowers, somewhat like this is the poetry of the Bible to its prose. The prose gives the substance of doctrine, the poetry expresses the responsive sentiments of the believer.

The poetic form of much of the contents of Scripture is obscured to us by the necessary limitations of translation, and still more by the unnecessary awkwardness of the printing of our common version. So that we are apt to overlook the fact that the Bible is very rich in poetic qualities. We have whole books that are distinctly poems; as the book of Job, the Song of Solo-



mon and the Psalms. But also in the prophets and elsewhere many passages are poetic both in form and substance, addressed to our emotions, setting forth the truth not only that we may know it; but that we may love it and seek it and live it.

It is fortunate that the characteristic features of Hebrew poetry are such that they are not lost by translation into other tongues; and, since so much of the beauty and effectiveness of poetry depends upon its form, it is very well worth while to study the poetic art of the Psalms, that we may appreciate their beauty and feel the full import of their messages to us.

We should notice first that the distinction between prose and poetry is chiefly this: prose aims to present truth *in logical order* and completeness, while poetry takes only the salient features, and of those features *makes a picture*. Poetry is addressed to the imagination, prose is addressed to the intelligence; prose aims to make us know, but poetry to make us *feel*.

Prose is literal, poetry is picturesque; prose is actual, poetry is ideal; yet poetry is truer than prose, because it presents truth more broadly, it produces in the mind of the hearer the whole state of mind of the speaker, for every state of mind consists not merely of knowledge but of associated feeling.

This definition of poetry would include much that would be properly classified as eloquence or oratory; but this is only to say that eloquence is highly poetic, and that the distinction between poetry and eloquence is not a hard and fast line but rather a matter of degree. Much oratory is highly poetic, while much that is called poetry is merely prose in poetic dress.

Poetry is more artistic, and therefore we naturally seek for some artistic form in which to set it forth.

Now, it is these peculiar forms of poetic expression that differentiate Hebrew from classical or English poetry. The essential quality of poetry is the same in all languages, but the form or dress in which it is arrayed vary from age to age, and differ in different tongues.

In English, poetry is distinguished from prose by its *rhythm*, and *meter* and *rhyme*. In earlier English, alliteration was largely used to produce somewhat the same effect as rhyme.

By rhythm we mean the pleasing cadence or orderly flow of sound, due to the inflection and stress of voice falling in such order as to please the ear and seem harmonious to the sense. The excellence of prose depends to some degree on this quality, and the good orator must avoid the combinations of accent and emphasis that do not harmonize with his thought, and also the monotonous or sing-song tones which are so tiresome.

When this rhythm or wave-like quality is reduced to a fixed and regular order we call it meter—or measure. This gives us the first distinctive feature of classical and English poetry. This meter, or measured quality, is given by so arranging our words that we have the accented and unaccented syllables recurring at regular intervals—in some regular order. It may be in groups of two syllables, one of which is accented, and the other is not; as,

“Before Jehovah’s awful throne,  
Ye nations bow with sacred joy;  
Know that the Lord is God alone,  
He can create and he destroy.”

Here the measure is made up of groups of two syllables of which the first is unaccented and the second accented; or,

“Other refuge have I none,  
Hangs my helpless soul on Thee;  
Leave, ah! leave me not alone,  
Still support and comfort me.”

This measure is also made up of feet of two syllables, but the accent is on the first. Or, we may have meter in which the group or foot contains three syllables, and the accent falls regularly on any one of them.

As:

“How firm a foundation  
Ye saints of the Lord—  
Is found for your faith in  
His excellent word.”

Or:

“Come ye disconsolate,  
Where'er ye languish—  
Come to the mercy seat,  
Fervently kneel.”

And so, in a great variety of ways, the regular recurrence of accented and unaccented syllables gives the pleasing regularity which we call meter, and enables us to fit musical compositions to any number of similar verses.

Rhyme is the recurrence of the same sound at regular intervals. The simplest arrangement of rhyme is the recurrence of the same sound at the end of two or more successive lines; as,

“All praise to thee my God this night  
For all the blessings of the light;  
Keep me, oh keep me King of Kings  
Beneath thy own almighty wings.”

But the more common arrangement is the rhyming of the second and fourth lines; as,

“The Lord's my shepherd, I'll not want  
He makes me down to lie  
In pastures green; He leadeth me  
The quiet waters by.”

Other arrangements are occasionally used, as when the first and fourth, and the second and third lines rhyme together:

“Let knowledge grow from more to more,  
But more of reverence in us dwell,

That mind and soul according well,  
May make one music as before."

In old English, or Anglo Saxon, somewhat the same effect is produced by the recurrence of the same sound at the beginning, or several words in the same line. But this method has entirely gone out of fashion.

Now the point to notice is this: in all poetic forms there is the conscious effort to express the sentiment in some way that the sound shall have a certain regular beat, or cadence, that is more or less artistic and similar in its effect to musical composition.

It is extremely difficult to translate such poetry from one language to another, for the obvious reason that words of the same meaning in any two languages rarely have the same number of syllables or corresponding accents.

Fortunately for us, the form of Hebrew poetry is not based on meter or rhyme. It does not seem to have given much heed even to rhythm, though a certain regard to the inflections or cadences of speech is naturally observed.

But the essential feature of Hebrew poetry is the arrangement of *thought and imagery*. The artistic quality is found not in the sound but in the sense.

The fundamental characteristic of the Hebrew poetry is a matching, or *balancing*, of one expression with another expression of the same sentiment, or of some contrasted thought or feeling; as,

"The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof,  
The world and they that dwell therein.  
For He hath founded it upon the seas  
And established it upon the floods." Psalm 24:1-2 Or

"A soft answer turneth away wrath,  
But grievous words stir up anger." Proverbs 15:1.

This feature is called parallelism and is found in all Hebrew poetry.

It is used not only in the simple way illustrated by these examples, but is carried out in a variety of forms, in the arrangement of lines and stanzas, and sometimes of whole Psalms that are set in this parallel relation so as to make a larger unity, as in Psalms 42 and 43; where we have in the combined Psalms three stanzas, each closing with the refrain, "Why are thou cast down, O my soul?"

The influence of this arrangement is best appreciated by the simple experiment of reading any of the Psalms omitting the second line of each couplet.

As,

"Blessed is the man who walketh not in the counsel of the wicked. But his delight is in the law of the Lord. He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water. The wicked are not so. Therefore, the wicked shall not stand in the Judgment. For the Lord knoweth the way of the righteous; but the way of the wicked shall perish." Psalm I.

The various forms in which this principle of poetic composition is carried out are admirably shown by Dr. Moulton in his book "LITERARY STUDIES OF THE BIBLE," and more fully illustrated in his "MODERN READERS' BIBLE," where the printing of the lines brings out this parallel structure as it cannot otherwise be expressed.

We cannot here give even a passing glance at all these forms, but you will find them very interesting and exceedingly helpful to a more perfect appreciation of the beauty and the meaning of the Psalms and other poetic books of Scripture.

This feature of Hebrew poetry is important also in its influence on the prose writings of the Bible, especially in the prophetic books where we find many of the most beautiful passages are really poetry, not only in their picturesque and figurative quality but in their form as well.

For example, the beautiful fifty-third chapter of Isaiah is composed entirely on this order of duplication or parallelism.

1. "Who hath believed our report.
2. To whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed.
1. He shall grow up before him as a tender plant.
2. As a root out of a dry ground.
1. He hath no form nor comeliness.
2. When we shall see him there is no beauty that we should

desire.

1. He was despised and rejected of men.
2. A man of sorrows and acquainted with grief." And so on

throughout.

The same principle influenced the language of our Lord, and the recognition of it is sometimes necessary to the full understanding of his teaching. For example, the passage, "Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast your pearls before swine lest they trample them under their feet and turn again and rend you."

Here we have a poetic form quite common in Hebrew—called by Dr. Moulton the *envelope figure*—where the first and last lines match, and the second with the third; so that the meaning is, "Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, lest they turn and rend you; neither cast your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet."

It is worth noting also, that the form of the Lord's Prayer is influenced by this principle.

"Our Father which art in heaven,  
Hallowed be thy name;  
Thy Kingdom come,  
Thy will be done  
On earth as it is in heaven."

So the meaning is manifestly,

“Our Father which art in heaven,  
Hallowed be thy name, on earth as in heaven.  
Thy Kingdom come, on earth as in heaven.  
Thy will be done, on earth as in heaven.”

We cannot here consider the more complicated applications of this form of composition; but I commend it most earnestly to your consideration. The following passages will be found of special interest:

Psalms 105 to be read omitting the second line of each couplet.

Psalms 107 and 136 for the use of refrain or chorus.

Psalms 46 for the division into stanzas—as printed in the revised version. But the chorus as given in Verses 7 and 11 should be supplied also after verse 3 where the word SELAH is written.

#### THE PSALMS

The Book of Psalms as we have it is a collection of lyric poems of various ages. The popular title the “Psalms of *David*” is no part of the Scripture and is of no force or value except as an evidence of the traditional influence of David on the poetry and music of the nation.

It would be difficult to prove the authorship of any of the Psalms, but it is probable that many of them were written by David, and some others in his time. Some of them are evidently from the time of the exile, e. g. 137: “By the rivers of Babylon there we sat down. Yea, we wept when we remembered Zion.”

The 126th is certainly in celebration of their restoration. “When the Lord turned the captivity of Zion we were like them that dreamed.” And the 90th is attributed to Moses, and I know of no reason to doubt the tradition to that effect. The question of authorship is of interest to antiquarians rather than to Bible students.

The Book of Psalms, as we have it, has been called the hymn book of the temple, and this is probably correct enough for practical purposes.

Many of the Psalms were evidently composed for use in public worship; e. g., 95 to 101. Some of them probably for special occasions; e. g., the 24th for the formal bringing of the ark of God from the house of Obed-edom to the Tabernacle in Jerusalem.

But they are all adapted to more popular use, as the fit and edifying expression of personal devotion and national loyalty. This has been perhaps their greatest use and their most potent influence, for they have been in all ages of the church's history the means of devout reflection, the expression of the highest religious sentiments and the finest forms of public and private worship.

Their influence on Christian worship has been beyond measure; for they have not only been in constant use in all the churches, but they have been the models and the inspiration of all Christian hymns.

They are of great variety, and their themes include almost every possible phase and form of religious meditation and experience. Their most common themes are joy in the gracious favor of God, gratitude for his gifts of providence and grace, hope in his promised salvation.

Their chief note is praise. History and doctrine and exhortation and rebuke are incidental to the office of worship. From first to last throughout the varied forms and substance of the whole great collection of these contributions of many hearts through many ages there runs a sweet glad note of loving devotion, crying,

"Why art thou cast down, O my soul?

And why art thou disquieted within me! Hope thou in God; for I shall yet praise him for the help of his countenance."



## CHAPTER XXIV

### THE BOOK OF JOB

**T**HE Law and the Prophets give a revelation of God that is, in a broad sense, complete.

The great attributes of God, his wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness and truth are abundantly manifested in his works of creation and providence; and the duties required of us are outlined in the decalogue, the ritual and the fervid discourses of the prophets.

The gracious purpose that is manifested in the history of that nation specially ordained to be the priest of the World, and thus to mediate a great redemption whereby all nations should be blessed; the marvelous loving kindness shown in his dealings with individuals, and the illumination of chosen men to be his spokesman, all together make a wonderful record of things we are to believe concerning God and the duties required of men.

But the human mind is never satisfied with mere facts and directions; the demand for explanation, for reasons why, is instinctive and characteristic of the human soul.

The faith required of us is never the blind acceptance of a creed, or the unquestioning adherence to tradition, but an intelligent and reasonable confidence in a God revealed to our intelligence, satisfying our moral instincts and appealing to religious affections.

A large part of the scripture is addressed to the emotional side of our nature, and has for its purpose the cultivation of our right affections,—love for God and all goodness, joy and peace and all holy aspirations. It reveals not only God's redemptive work which takes us out of a horrible pit and out of

the miry clay, sets our feet upon the rock of truth and establishes our way to holiness, but also puts "a new song in our mouth," a new hope, a nobler purpose and sweeter aspirations.

The Book of Psalms is perhaps the best example of this form of revelation, abounding in the comforting assurance of God's love, giving beautiful expression to the responding love and confidence and gratitude of the human heart.

Somewhat different from the Psalms and other portions of the scriptures which express and cultivate the affections, are those portions which are addressed to our understanding, but with the purpose of *promoting trust and confidence* concerning matters which by their very nature are beyond our comprehension.

It is observed that the instinctive craving for an understanding of ourselves and the universe of which we are a part is, of necessity, insatiable. The finite mind cannot comprehend an infinite God, nor appreciate eternal purposes.

In the nature of the case, the wider we make our circle of light the wider will be the circle of darkness lying beyond our light. The growth of knowledge implies the greater increase of opportunity for further discovery; each new discovery multiplies the intelligent questions we can ask.

This is true of all forms of revelation; and the limit of our knowledge is in us, not in the thing revealed or in the scheme of revelation. Your pint cup holds but a pint, and its capacity is not increased by pouring rivers into it; and however clearly God may proclaim the truth in nature and providence, or by His spirit moving on the heart of man, there must ever be the limit fixed by our capacity to receive, to understand and to appreciate. Hence there must always be the *problems* of life, questions not answered yet, perhaps unanswerable to finite minds.

What do we find in Scripture in regard to these? What is the attitude of mind we are to hold in reference to problems that

thoughtful men in every age and country have pondered with serious and reverent mind?

The study of such matters is encouraged. There is no limit or restriction placed upon the spirit of inquiry. The book of Ecclesiastes is a fine example of the most untrammelled speculation on the perplexing problems of life.

But the book which gives the answer to the general question what are we to do about the problems that we cannot solve, and yet which constantly present themselves in our experience, is the *Book of Job*.

The question which forms the subject of the book is *the mystery of Providence*. Why do the righteous suffer and the wicked often prosper? If God be the holy, wise and powerful preserver and governor of all the world, why does justice so often miscarry and the course of nature seem indifferent to moral worth?

This problem has perplexed the thoughtful minds of all ages. The Preacher of Ecclesiastes observed that, "There be righteous men to whom it happeneth according to the work of the wicked": again, "There be wicked men to whom it happeneth according to the work of the righteous: I said this also is vanity." A psalmist also confessed that he was "sore vexed" when he saw how prosperous the wicked were.

The sages of the ancient East held the doctrine of metempsychosis to account for this anomaly. They said the same soul has many incarnations, and the account of each man's conduct is an open account, his debt to justice is carried over from one incarnation to another and never closed until the books are balanced—for most souls a hopeless task.

The ancient Greeks invented Nemesis, the goddess of retribution, whose office it was to peruse the offender in the region of the dead until the demands of justice were satisfied. Neither of these solutions could be accepted by those who were acquainted with the revelations of the Law and Prophets, and the question is discussed in Scripture from the point of view of the believer

in God's wise and righteous government. The problem is stated not in the abstract form, but in a concrete case—the case of “a man whose name was Job”—which is set forth in the following particulars.

Job is described as “perfect and upright” a man who “feared God and eschewed evil.” His state and circumstances are ideal. He is, in brief, “the greatest of the men of the East.”

On this perfect and upright man there falls a series of overwhelming calamities. His wealth, his children, his bodily comfort and his reputation are swept from him by an overwhelming flood of misfortune, and the greatest man of the East is left penniless, childless, suffering and with none so poor to do him reverence; and all this for no fault of his, nor for any reason that he or any one could guess.

Such is the case stated—probably a supposed case—a parable—but in all essential features it is the picture of that which we all have seen and wondered at.

No man knows who wrote the book of Job, or who Job was nor where nor when he lived. Of unknown date and authorship—the most catholic of books, it presents the problem as old as human history and as common as human tears.

The case is stated in prose, and then the discussion is presented in the artistic form of a dramatic poem.

The first scene tells how Job's three friends, hearing of his sore distress, hasten to his side, and sitting down beside him with garments rent and with dust upon their heads, they pay the loving tribute of silent sympathy, “So they sat down with him upon the ground seven days and seven nights and none speak a word unto him, for they saw that his grief was very great.”

The second scene presents the long and thorough discussion of the question why does God send affliction.

Job breaks the silence and bemoans his terrible distress, wishing he had never been born, longing for death to give him release, praising the grave—“There the wicked cease from troub-

ling and the weary are at rest."

Then the friends begin their well-meant efforts to "comfort" Job. They are perfectly clear in their view of the matter. God is just, and deals out justice, even and exact, to every man. Suffering is the penalty of sin; Job suffers, therefore Job has sinned. His seeming righteousness only aggravates the offense, for it implies hypocrisy.

It is greatly to the credit of the friends that, convinced as they were of Job's wickedness, they do not desert him or mitigate aught of their friendship; but with tender words attempt to bring him to restoration through repentance. To this end Eliphaz addresses himself with admirable tact and tenderness. He states his views clearly and without blinking the facts as he saw them. Job must be accused and brought to confession, but to make the accusation less offensive he puts it in the graceful figure of a poetic vision and a voice speaking from the darkness.

"Shall mortal man be more just than God? Shall a man be more pure than his Maker?"

Having opened the way for Job to come to confession, he frankly urges him to it.

"But as for me, I would seek unto God, And unto God would I commit my cause." He encourages him to hope for God's favor and his restoration.

"Behold, happy is the man whom God correcteth;  
Therefore despise not thou the chastenings of the Almighty.  
For he maketh sore and bindeth up;  
He woundeth and his hands make whole."—  
"Thou shalt come to thy grave in a full age,  
Like as a shock of corn cometh in in its season.  
Lo this, we have searched it, so it is;  
Hear it, and know thou it for thy good."

To this Job replies by denying the implied charge of transgression as the cause of his affliction. He pleads "not guilty," and challenges his accuser to prove his accusation.

"Teach me, and I will hold my peace,  
And cause me to understand wherein I have erred."

Then Bildad more harshly stated their views, essentially the same as that of Eliphaz.

"Doth God pervert judgment?  
Or doth the Almighty pervert justice?"—  
"If thou wert pure and upright;  
Surely now He would awake for thee."

Job answers, rather more calmly, that he does not claim absolute perfection, but only innocence of such unusual wickedness as they infer from his unusual suffering.

"Of a truth I know it is so,  
But how can a man be just before God?  
If he be pleased to contend with him,  
He cannot answer him one of a thousand."

He makes his complaint to God, crying,

"Shew me wherefore thou contendest with me,  
Is it good unto thee that thou shouldst oppress?  
—Although Thou knowest that I am not wicked?"

Zophar now breaks out in violent accusation.

"Should thy boasting make men hold their peace,  
And when thou mocketh, shall no man make thee ashamed?  
Know therefore that God exacteth of thee less  
Than thine iniquity deserveth."

But his purpose is good, his effort is to bring Job to repentance.

"If iniquity is in thine hand, put it far from thee,  
And let not unrighteousness dwell in thy tents;  
Surely then shalt thou lift up thy face without spot:  
Yea, thou shalt be steadfast, and shalt not fear,  
For thou shalt forget thy misery,  
Thou shalt remember it as waters that are passed away,  
And thy life shall be clearer than noon-day,  
Though there be darkness, it shall be as the morning,  
And thou shalt be secure, because there is hope."

Thus we have three different statements of the doctrine that all suffering is punishment for sin. The argument is simple and to their minds conclusive. God is just and therefore cannot send affliction unless it is deserved. He has sent affliction, severe and unusual, on Job and the conclusion is inevitable. Job is exceedingly bad.

Job's answer is equally simple and conclusive. He denies the fact. The discussion is thus dead locked, and makes no progress. The argument falls from the dignified and kindly spirit of their first admonitions to the rude and irritating gibes of anger.

Job keeps his temper and his dignity, but resents their smug assurance of their superior wisdom.

"Then Job answered and said, No doubt but ye are the people,  
And wisdom will die with you  
But I also have understanding as well as you;  
I am not inferior to you;  
Yea, who knoweth not such things as these?"

He proceeds to point out the facts, facts that are obvious and undeniable.

"The tents of robbers prosper,  
And they that provoke God are secure."

Look for yourselves, he cries,

“Ask the beasts of the field, and they shall teach thee  
And the fowls of the air, and they shall tell thee.  
Or speak to the earth, and it shall teach thee;  
And the fish of the sea shall declare unto thee.”

It is evident to anyone who is willing to see that the righteous do not always prosper, nor are the wicked destroyed.

The only answer that can be made to this is that the prosperity of the wicked is only apparent, not real, or only for a little while. This is offered:

“Knoweth thou not this of old time  
Since man was placed upon earth  
That the triumphing of the wicked is short  
And the joy of the godless but for a moment?”

But Job's rejoinder is the strong denial of any such providential control. He confesses that he is “troubled” and “horrificed” by the facts, but facts they are, and their denial of them cannot change them.

“Even when I remember I am troubled  
And horror taketh hold on my flesh,  
Why do the wicked live  
Become old, yea, wax mighty in power?  
Their seed is established with them in their sight,  
And their offspring before their eyes.—  
Then send forth their little ones like a flock  
And their children dance,  
They spend their days in prosperity,  
And in a moment they go down to their grave;  
Yet they said unto God, Depart from us,



For we desire not the knowledge of Thy ways.—  
How then comfort ye me with vanity  
Seeing in your answers there remaineth only falsehood?"

The friends have nothing further to offer. They seem to lose confidence in their own doctrine; though they do not confess it. They are much less confident in their assertions. Job is settled in his refusal of their theory of Providence, but has none of his own to offer. The more he reflects on the facts the more he is perplexed. He never doubts that God is the Supreme Ruler, holy and just and kind, but he cannot understand why he permits such anomalies in his government of the world.

He turns from the discussion of the problem, and reflects on the practical aspects of the case. In the chapters XXVI-XXVIII, we have the finest meditation on the ways of God that has ever been put in words. He contemplates his marvelous works of creation and providence.

"He stretched out the north over empty space,  
And hangeth the earth upon nothing  
He bindeth up the waters in his thick cloud;  
And the cloud is not rent under them.—  
The pillars of heaven tremble  
And are astonished at his rebuke.  
By his Spirit the heavens are garnished,  
And He hath pierced the fleeing serpent.  
Lo, these are but the outskirts of his ways,  
And we hear but a small whisper of Him!  
The thunder of His power who can understand?"

In the midst of this great universe how is man to find his way?

"Where shall wisdom be found?  
And where is the place of understanding?—

God only understandeth the way thereof,  
And He knoweth the place thereof.—  
And unto man he said,  
Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom  
And to depart from evil is understanding.”

Such is the culmination of his thought. The only practical conclusion that can be drawn from reflection on the facts of life is this, God is sovereign, absolute, infinite and unsearchable. Man's only wisdom is submission and obedience. He must accept things as they are, he can neither judge nor alter them. And Job comforts himself in the assurance that his own conscience does not condemn him and therefore somehow, sometime, God will make all right.

At this point a new thought is introduced. It is put in the mouth of Elihu, who is represented as a young man, a mere bystander, not a party of either part, but one who has heard all that Job and his friends have said, and finds both these positions utterly unsatisfactory. He reviews the case, and makes the excellent observation that affliction may not be for punishment, but for education, for the development and restraint of a man.

“For God speaketh once,  
Yea twice, yet man regardeth it not,  
In a dream, in a vision of the night,  
When deep sleep falleth upon men,  
In slumberings upon the bed;  
Then He openeth the ears of men,  
And sealeth their instruction,  
That he may withdraw man from his purpose,  
And hide pride from man.”

Not only by such revelations does God reveal wisdom to men and strive to turn him to higher things, but by pain and affliction he accomplishes his discipline and education in virtue.

“He is chastened also with pain upon his bed,  
And the multitude of his bones with strong pain;—  
Lo, all these things worketh God  
Often times with man  
To bring back his soul from the pit,  
To be enlightened with the light of the living.”

This view is put forward by the author of the book, apparently, to indicate its value and appropriateness; but it is then passed by without further discussion; thus indicating that, though it is a true and important doctrine, it does not solve the problem, or explain the mystery of providence. The question still remains why are the righteous afflicted and the wicked granted prosperity? No answer has been given that seems adequate or satisfactory.

Job has cried to God with an earnest and pitiful cry. He had called on Him to speak in his behalf, to vindicate him from the wicked accusations of his friends, or else himself accuse him, that he might know his fault. It was a cry from the depths. The cry of one ready to perish; sometimes it seems to overstep the bounds of reverence and become a demand. He almost claims it as his right that God should explain his treatment of him, or at the very least give him a hearing and let him plead his cause before him.

“Behold now, I have ordered my cause;  
I know that I am righteous;  
Then call thou and I will answer;  
Or let me speak, and answer thou me.”

But there is no response to this appeal, and the resources of reflection and speculation are exhausted, leaving all in darkness. Philosophy has failed to answer.

The next act in the drama is the climax of it all. It opens

with the dramatic announcement, "Then the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind," and we exclaim, Ah, now we will have the whole mystery revealed, the problem solved, and our questionings answered.

But, to our surprise, we find nothing of the kind. Not a word of explanation, not a hint as to the reasons why Job suffered. The subject of the discourse put in the mouth of Jehovah is the power and wisdom and goodness of God, as shown in his works of creation and providence. He answered "out of the whirlwind"—out of the forces and operations of nature. These speak with a thousand tongues and tell of his wisdom and might.

"In reason's ear they all rejoice,  
And utter forth a glorious voice;  
Forever singing as they shine,  
The hand that made us is divine."

The answer to Job's cry is simply an appeal to facts,—things done and being done throughout the boundless realms of this great world; facts open and patent to all observers.

These facts are brought forward with wonderful poetic beauty. From a purely literary point of view, there is no grander poetry in human language than the chapters which celebrate the glories of the cosmic universe. For example, take this creation hymn:

"Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth?  
Declare, if thou hast understanding.  
Who determined the measures thereof, if thou knoweth,  
Or who stretched the line upon it?  
Whereupon are the foundations thereof fastened?  
Or who laid the corner stone thereof;  
When the morning stars sang together,  
And all the sons of God shouted for joy?"

Or who shut up the sea with doors,  
When it brake forth, as if it issued out of the womb;  
When I made the cloud the garment thereof,  
And thick darkness a swaddling band for it,  
And prescribed for it my decree,  
And set bars and doors,  
And said, hitherto shalt thou come but no further;  
And here shall thy proud waves be stayed."

Or the hymn of nature:

"Where is the way to the dwelling of light?  
And as for darkness, where is the place thereof?—  
By what way is the light parted,  
Or the east wind scattered upon the earth?  
Who hath cleft a channel for the water flood,  
Or a way for the lightning of the thunder,  
To cause it to rain upon a land where no man is;  
On the wilderness, wherein there is no man;  
To satisfy the waste and desolate ground;  
And to cause the tender grass to spring forth?—  
Canst thou bind the cluster of the Pleiades,  
Or loose the bands of Orion?  
Canst thou lead forth the Mazzaroth in their season?  
Or canst thou guide the Bear with her train?—  
Who hath put wisdom in the dark clouds?  
Or who hath given understanding to the meteor?—  
Wilt thou hunt the prey for the lioness?  
Or satisfy the appetite of the young lions,  
When they couch in their dens,  
And abide in the covert to lie in wait?  
Who provideth for the raven his food,  
When his young ones cry up unto God,  
And wander for lack of meat?"

So the beautiful poem goes on, touching here and there the sweet chords of Nature's boundless harmonies.

The hinds of the open fields, the wild goats of the rocks, and the wild ass "whose house I have made the wilderness, and who scorneth the tumult of the city"; the wild ox, also, "who cannot be yoked to the furrow" and the ostrich and the eagle, and the horse "who paweth in the valley and rejoiceth in his strength," all these and other examples of God's marvelous works are cited, celebrated, in this sublime and exquisite song.

But what is the gist of it all? What has this to do with the problem of the book? How does this explain the mystery of Providence?

It does not explain it. This is the very point and the message of the whole book. God's ways are so much higher than our ways, and his thoughts than our thoughts, that we cannot hope to understand.

We hear "a whisper" of his ways, but "the thunder of his power who can understand?" The finite cannot comprehend the infinite; man cannot comprehend God.

What then? Are we shut up to a blind and irrational fate? Are we the helpless subjects of an arbitrary scheme of forces and laws that are deaf to our crys and indifferent to our distress?

Quite the contrary: we are the objects of divine affection, the children of a loving father, the subjects of an all-wise and omnipotent ruler.

We are under the tender care of one whose hands formed the boundless sky and all the hosts of heaven, whose wisdom planned the universe, and whose tender mercies are over all his works.

We can not understand Him, nor His plans and purposes; but can know Him, we can be confident in His wisdom and His love. We can trust Him in the dark.

The mysteries of His Providence are all too vast and complicated for us to know, but in the words of Paul, we "know *whom* we have believed, and are persuaded that he is able to keep that

which we have committed to Him."

The lesson of the book may be summed up in the proposition, Faith is reasonable. Trust in God is well founded. The voice from the whirlwind declares the wisdom and power and love of Him who sitteth on high.

If then we have the assurance of the love of Him "who is able to keep us from falling and to present us faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy," what better motto could reason demand, or intelligence suggest, than the beautiful creed of this great philosopher and saint.

"Behold the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom;  
And to depart from evil is understanding."

The book is completed by a short conclusion in prose; which tells of the restoration of Job to prosperity, and his death at a good old age. The prologue and conclusion are perhaps intended only as the dramatic setting of the case which forms the theme of the poem, but incidentally they teach some lessons of interest and importance.

The description of the perfect and upright men given in the prologue is very fine. "He feared God and eschewed evil." That gives his relation to God, reverent, devout, submissive, such is the basis of every perfect and upright life.

He eschewed evil—The word eschew was formerly the same as shun, and shy. He kept far from evil, shunned it, shied at it, as a timid horse shys at dangerous or doubtful objects.

Evil is not a thing to be trifled with, to be treated lightly, carelessly, but be shunned as we shun rattle snakes or smallpox.

These two terms express the foundations of his character; and, because of this sure foundation, it stood firm through the terrific strain of his afflictions.

Moreover, his care for his children's welfare included—emphasized, their religious welfare. "When their days of festivity

were gone about, he sent and sanctified them all." The round of festive pleasures, even the most innocent, are apt to crowd out serious thought. Wise is the parent who, while encouraging all wholesome joys of life, is careful to recall his sons and daughters to the solemn and sanctifying exercise of religion.

One very beautiful incident is noted in the conclusion. In the restoration, the first thing restored is the most important, that is the impaired relations between Job and his three friends. The discussion had been vigorous, sometimes heated and very personal. The severe and unwarranted accusations made were hard to bear and hard to forget: hence the relations were strained, and some irritation was natural. See how the Lord prescribes for such a case. He makes Job the advocate and intercessor for those who had wounded him. They were directed to bring a burnt offering for their sin, and Job is directed to pray for them. It is an appeal to his magnanimity, and his generous heart responds. He prays; and, as he prays for them, all bitterness disappears, and peace and kindness and friendship is restored.

But this is not all: Job's restoration is connected with this prayer for others. "And the Lord turned again the captivity of Job *when he prayed for his friends.*"

With artistic fitness the book closes with the restoration of Job's possessions all increased two-fold; all earthly goods are doubled, and the sons and daughters also, for ten grew up about him to comfort his declining years, and ten had gone before to meet him in the heavenly home when at length he died, "being old and full of days."



## CHAPTER XXV

### THE HAGIOGRAPHY

*"Every Scripture inspired of God is also profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness."*

ONE of the obvious features of the Holy Scriptures is their great variety of form and contents.

While, in a most important sense, the Bible is a book, one book, the book, having all one divine source, one point of view and single purpose; it is none the less composed of many books, written at widely separated times and places, by many different authors, in divers literary forms, and for a great variety of immediate purposes.

It is possible to classify these books in many ways; according to their age, or authorship, their special themes, their literary form, or any other way convenience may suggest.

It has been customary from ancient times to classify the Old Testament in three divisions, called the Law, the Prophets and the Hagiology.

The Law and the Prophets contain the historical books, as well as those that are distinctly legal or didactic, though for some reason the books of Chronicles, Ezra and Nehemiah were put in the Hagiology.

For our present purpose, we will exclude these books just mentioned, and consider the remaining nine as a group having certain features common to them all, and therefore, conveniently considered together.

But the important purpose of taking this group together is to exhibit more distinctly the *unity* of their ethical teaching.

The name Hagiography means simply *Holy Writings*, and, in its use in reference to these portions of the Bible, indicates those books which are to be regarded as sacred, though they do not reveal either the commandments or the messages given by the prophets.

The difference is a very real one, although it is not easy to draw the line between various forms of revelation.

The books that we group under this name, are RUTH, ESTHER, JOB, THE PSALMS, THE PROVERBS, ECCLESIASTES, CANTICLES, LAMENTATIONS and DANIEL. These books are of different ages, separate authorship, and widely varied contents. They differ indeed in almost every way, but they have one feature in common; each one of them sets forth some one phase of *applied religion*, one special virtue or peculiar moral excellence. Taken together they give us a complete and harmonious *scheme of righteous conduct*, an *ideal character*.

The order in which the books are arranged in our Bible is not of special importance, but it happens to be a very convenient order for our present purpose.

We will consider each in its order, to discover its special message, and then notice that the resulting sum of all is not merely a few great virtues, not a group of random illustrations of practical religion and good morals, but a remarkably complete and harmonious ideal of a righteous life.

### RUTH

The story of Ruth is a very simple narrative of domestic life. The heroine is a woman of the common people, not of Jewish blood, a Moabitess, but married to a man from Bethlehem and living in the land of Moab. Her husband dies and leaves her poor and homeless. She decides to return with her mother-in-law to the land of Judea. There she gleanes after the reapers in the

harvest field, and carries home her scanty sheaf and shares it with her mother. By a series of simple incidents the story tells how she met with Boaz, and of her marriage.

The whole story is as simple as the prattle of a child, as home-like as the kitchen fire. The heroine does nothing at all heroic. The circumstances are as commonplace as possible; the only distinction is poverty and toil. There is not a spectacular scene in the whole story, nor any incident that is remarkable; yet this story has charmed its readers for four thousand years, because it is the real life of a womanly woman. She was poor, but all her conduct had a sweet dignity that commands respect. She toils in the field for a petty compensation, but brings home her honest earnings and shares it with her household with a simple grace. Though poor and bereft and hard working, there is never a whimper nor a cry, but a sweet and gentle acquiescence in her lot that is in perfect taste. She manifests no high degree of culture, but she has the real refinement of an honest heart, the essential elegance of a womanly woman.

It is a refreshing picture for our time of ultra conventionality and artificial grace; a pleasing contrast to the sordid sham of the pretentious rabble of rich but ill bred idlers, who flaunt themselves to the admiring gaze of a silly world.

Yet it is not at all the story of religious enthusiasm. It is a story of every day life, with its homely problems of food and home, of love and marriage. Ruth was no cloistered nun, nor pale-faced martyr, nor brilliant heroine of some tragic incident, but a woman of the common people, doing common duties in most ordinary circumstances, but doing them with the simple sincerity of a clean heart and a right spirit.

The beauty of this story is like the beauty of the forest or the meadow,—the fundamental beauty of the common things.

Such is the story of the book of Ruth. It is a fine example of the most fundamental of all virtues, the virtue of a sweet and sane domestic life.

## ESTHER

The story of Esther is one of the gems of literature,—one of the great stories of the world.

It is in striking contrast with the Book of Ruth. Instead of lowly scenes of poverty and toil, we have here the gorgeous splendor of an oriental court; instead of the gentler graces of a commonplace lot, we have the tragic heroism of a beautiful queen; and in place of the peaceful employments of the farm and village, we have the villainous intrigues of a corrupt politician and the shrewd devices of a typical Jew. I know not which is the more beautiful; as I know not which to admire more, the stupendous grandeur of the snow crowned Alps, or the quiet beauty of the fertile valley. The world is full of various beauty, so life is full of diverse excellence.

The story of Esther is familiar. This Hebrew girl by her unusual beauty wins the highest social position in the world of her time.

In the bloom of her youth, and in the very noonday of her remarkable prosperity, a crisis arises in the history of her people. It is suggested to her that, if she will risk her life on their behalf, it is barely possible that she may save them from destruction. She hesitates, because the risk is great and the chance of success is small. It seems a forlorn hope, and she has much to lose.

But Mordecai, her cousin and foster father, exhorts her to consider that this may be the providential reason for her being placed upon the throne. "Who knows," said he, "but that thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this."

The issue was now clearly before her. On the one hand, she could hardly have supposed that she herself was in any serious danger, and her people were probably but little known to her. To risk her life for them was certainly a very great deal to ask. On the other hand, she knew their danger, and that it was possible, at least, that, by throwing her life into the balance, she

might turn the scale and save them from destruction.

It is a most dramatic situation. On the one hand was her youth and beauty, the highest social position in the world, and the very instincts of life itself, all pleading hard, as they are ever wont to plead, "let this cup pass from me." On the other hand was duty, stern, uncompromising duty, pointing to a path, that, in all human probability, meant death; and fruitless death at that.

We must weigh all this if we would rightly judge the splendid heroism of this Hebrew girl, and properly appreciate the courage of the answer which she had the grace to send to Mordecai, "Go gather together all the Jews that are present in Shushan, and fast ye for me; neither eat nor drink for three days, night nor day; I, also, and my maidens will fast likewise; and so will I go in unto the king, which is not according to the law; and if I perish, I perish."

Then, the thrilling story of her bold adventure into the king's forbidden presence, the success of her noble effort, the escape of her people, the poetic justice of Haman's fate, the establishment of the feast of Purim which has been celebrated from that day down to this—all these combine to make the story of Esther what we have called it, one of the gems of literature, among the first and finest in the world.

It teaches in the most effective way the everlasting truth, that *the people's need is the hero's opportunity*, and that no one can separate himself from his community, his race, or the times in which he lives. "Who knows but thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?" is but a more poetic way of saying, "a public office is a public trust," and social eminence is a moral opportunity.

The book of Esther is in some respects a surprising book to be included in the canon and classed as Holy Writ. It has but little of the odor of sanctity. The word God does not occur in all its pages. But is not this the most effective way of teach-

ing that all duty is religious duty, all truth is God's truth, and whether He reveal his truth by the rapt visions of a holy prophet, by the fervent words of a Galilean fisherman, or by this pleasing picture of an oriental queen, no matter. No matter what light we see by, if only we do see.

#### THE BOOK OF JOB

We have had occasion to speak more fully of this book when we considered Hebrew poetry; but here we look for a moment at its place in the Hagiography and its contribution to the ethical ideal given in these books.

The book as a whole deals with a problem, a question as old as human philosophy, namely, the mystery of Providence: Why do the righteous suffer and the wicked prosper?

The important teaching of the book is not the answer which it gives to this question,—for it really gives none, but rather the *practical duty* of man in view of the fact that there is so much in his lot that he *cannot understand*. In other words, it is a defense of the proposition that confidence in God is reasonable because we have convincing proof of his *wisdom, power* and *love*; therefore we can safely trust our life to his good purpose, and find our wisdom in obedience.

“Behold, the fear of the Lord; that is wisdom. And to depart from evil is understanding.” This is the great practical doctrine of the book, and its contribution to the scheme of conduct presented in these books so well called Holy Writings.

#### THE PSALMS

From the book of Job to the Psalms is an easy step. The reasonableness of trust in God and obedience to him is the practical basis of all religious devotion. This doctrine, so sublimely presented in the book of Job, seems to find a natural response in

the Psalms, where the emotions of love and loyalty and sweet devotion find expression.

The Psalms are the composition of many authors, and they are of various dates—probably from the time of Moses to the time of the restoration from the captivity in Babylon—a period of over one thousand years. Yet the conception of God's character and his relation to man is the same throughout them all. The same ideals are cherished, and the graces of love and reverence and gratitude are sung and celebrated.

They have to do with the feelings, the religious affections; and these find their best expression in poetic forms and musical art.

Many of the psalms were composed for use in public worship, but their use was never confined to such service; they were always the fit and effective expression of the personal experience of individual souls.

By the psalms, probably more than by any other means, was the religious life of the people cultivated and exalted, and they, therefore, have always held the first place in the affections of those who love God and endeavor after righteousness.

They are preeminently hagiography—holy writings—and most effective in the cultivation of that state of mind from which all righteous conduct flows.

The affections are the very root of character; conduct is but the rolling waves upon the surface of life, but love and devotion are the deep sea of the soul itself. What we are consists essentially in what we love, and love is cultivated by its expression.

In the forming of right ideals and in the attainment of those ideals, the psalms of Hebrew scriptures have been the most potent factor.

#### THE PROVERBS

The Book of Proverbs is a collection of practical maxims for the guidance of our daily lives. They are the sifted gleanings of

human experience; they sum up in terse expression the fruits of observation, and are convenient way marks on the paths of life.

Every nation has its proverbs, for every people learn by experience, and store up the wisdom thus acquired in this convenient form.

The proverbs of the Bible differ from other proverbs only in their higher wisdom and greater moral excellence. They, no doubt, originated in the shrewd insight of individuals, were accepted and endorsed by the common experience; they are, therefore, "the wisdom of many and the wit of one." They were sifted and selected by the inspired writers, and are in very truth "The laws of heaven for life on earth."

The proof of their inspiration is the fact that they do not mislead; they find response in every conscience, and stand the tests of time and trial in all ages.

It must be remembered, however, that many of the proverbs are but the expression of half truths, or some particular phase of truth. Like parables they must not be interpreted as applying in all points, but only such as they are intended to cover. As metaphors are said "not to go on all fours," so proverbs are to be applied with the aid of common sense and judgment.

"Answer a fool according to his folly; lest he be wise in his own conceit" is obviously the thing to do, sometimes, "Answer not a fool according to his folly, lest thou also be like unto him," is no less evidently the rule of wisdom. It is easy to point out cases in which a proverb taken too literally would be bad advice.

"Whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing, and obtaineth favor of the Lord" might very well be doubted, if understood to mean that all marriages are blessed of heaven. Or, "He that spareth his words hath knowledge," would not be true if it meant that the only test of wisdom is to be quiet; but in both these cases, and in all such cases, the meaning is obvious, and all the more impressive because it has an element of paradox.

There is a most delightful flavor of practical shrewdness in



these proverbs; they appeal to the man of affairs, as no other parts of Scripture. They are like good poetry, in that they say what we recognize at once as our own belief, but which we never apprehended so definitely, nor found so good an expression for.

They are marvelously rich in the variety of their applications, and in the profound philosophy which underlies them.

"He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city."

"The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity; but a broken spirit who can bear?"

The keen satire which turns the edge of its sword against the follies and shams of life is extremely fine.

"He that is slack in his work  
Is brother to him that is a destroyer."

"It is naught, it is naught, saith the buyer;  
But when he has gone his way, then he boasteth."

"The sluggard saith, 'There is a lion without;  
I shall be murdered in the streets'."

"He that diggeth a pit shall fall therein."

Many of the metaphors and other figurative expressions are very forceful:

"A soft answer breaketh the bone,"

"Fervent lips and a wicked heart are like an earthen vessel overlaid with silver dross."

"He kisseth the lips that giveth the right answer."

The touch of humor often gives zest to the proverb:

“He that blesseth his friend with a loud voice, rising early in the morning, it shall be counted a curse to him.”

“It is better to dwell in the corner of a house top than with a contentious woman in a wide house.”

The book of Proverbs as we have it is composed of five different collections, as follows: Bk I: 1-IX composed chiefly of eight essays on wisdom, showing its supreme importance, and urging the pursuit of it.

These essays on wisdom in general are illustrated by warning against specific follies,—especially against lewdness; and further emphasized by a collection of proverbs on the value of wisdom.

In the third of these essays occurs that most excellent injunction to prudence and good associations:

“Take fast hold of instruction; let her not go.  
Keep her; for she is thy life.  
Enter not into the path of the wicked,  
And walk not in the way of evil men.  
Avoid it; pass not by it;  
Turn from it and pass on.”

Book II:X-XXII:16, is entitled The Proverbs of Solomon, and consists of a great variety of practical observations on life social, commercial, moral and religious; illustrating almost every virtue and commending every wise way—a great store house of prudent rules of conduct.

This is much the largest section and is composed almost entirely of single maxims, mostly in the duplicate form, which is characteristic of Hebrew poetry, where the same thought is expressed in two parallel sentences, as,

“Pride goeth before destruction,  
And an haughty spirit before a fall.”

Perhaps more frequently the second sentence of the couplet expresses the antithesis of the first; as,

“The memory of the just is blessed;  
But the name of the wicked shall rot.”

Again, the couplet may consist of one metaphorical expression, and the other its literal application:

“As a jewel of gold in a swine’s snout,  
So is a fair woman which is without discretion.”

Bk III xxii:17—xxiv is in the form of an epistle, as though written to some inquirer, or some ethical culture society.

This section is more philosophical in its way of viewing life; its observations are those of the moralist rather than the man of the street, and the subjects are discussed more fully. For example, the lure of women and of wine was never depicted in truer colors than in xxiii:26-35.

Bk IV:xxv-xxix is entitled, Proverbs of Solomon which Hezekiah, King of Judah copied out.

Its contents are similar to those of Book II, but show more attention to the order and sequence of the various maxims, and also a tendency to expand and elaborate the thoughts.

Bk V: xxx-xxxI contains a number of short poems, mostly highly artificial in their form: as the number sonnets of xxx:7-31.

“Two things I have asked of thee;  
Deny me thou not before I die;  
Remove far from me vanity and lies;  
Give me neither poverty nor riches;  
Feed me with the food that is needful for me;  
Lest I be full, and deny thee and say, ‘Who is the Lord?’

Or lest I be poor and steal,  
And use profanely the name of my God."

The book closes with an acrostic poem on the virtuous woman, beginning,

"A virtuous woman who can find?  
Her price is far above rubies."

The importance of this book as a guide to righteous conduct needs no comment. It is obvious, and its place in the scheme of applied religion easily observed.

#### ECCLESIASTES

This book seems, on first impression, to strike a false note in the chorus of the holy writing. It seems the voice of the pessimist—almost the scorner, railing at life, and asking, "What is the good of it?"

If at times it brightens for a little, it soon relapses again to the melancholy refrain, "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity."

This refrain, so persistently used, challenges the inquiry, "*What* is vanity?" And the answer to this question seems to interpret the book.

That, which he insists is vanity, is life "*under the sun*" the life that is of this earth, earthy; the life that is mundane and material, that has no vision of a better world, no blessed hope, nor expectation of a life beyond.

If this be indeed the subject of his meditations, he may well establish his proposition that it is, largely, "vanity and a striving after wind."

"Alas for him who never sees  
The stars shine through his cypress trees;

Who hopeless lays his dead away,  
Nor looks to see the breaking day  
Across the mournful marbles play."

The vanity of earthly glory is a theme as old as human history—the easiest theme in which to prove one's proposition.

The author turns the subject over and over, views it from every aspect, cites cases for example, and elucidates his thought with great poetic art, till he has left no room for doubt that life under the sun comes to a lame and impotent conclusion. Its glory fades, its pleasures disappoint, its successes are achieved too late, and all our cherished achievements must be left to the man who comes after us, and, as he says rather bitterly, "Who knoweth whether he shall be a wise man or a fool."

But the book is after all a hopeful book. Like so much of Hebrew literature, the dark shadows which are so faithfully depicted serve to brighten the luster of the hope which is not grounded on anything "under the sun."

"This," he concludes, "this is the end of the matter; all hath been heard; fear God and keep his commandments; for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment whether it be good or whether it be evil."

This is not the conclusion of despair, nor the creed of pessimism. It is not at all the spirit of those who say, "Nothing matters much. We somehow muddle through and come to our end some time."

"And even the weariest river winds somewhere safe to sea."

It is the logical conclusion from the premises that this is *God's world*, and God is wise and God. *He* shall bring our work into judgment. Whatever man may say of our work, or of us, the ultimate decision, the only approval that matters is *His*.

“Only the Master shall praise it,  
Only the Master shall blame.”

“The evil days come, and the years draw nigh when thou shalt say, ‘I have no pleasure in them’.”

“The sun and the moon and the stars shall be darkened, and the clouds return after the rain.”

“And the dust return to the earth as it was, and the spirit return unto God who gave it.”

All that is under the sun *is* vanity. Our life is a vapor that appeareth for a little and vanisheth away, but the purposes of God go grandly on, and thus by another road we come to the same abiding place of hope and faith.

As Job found, “The conclusion of the whole matter” in the proposition,

“Behold the fear of the Lord that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding.”

So the “Preacher” of this book answers the ancient question, “Where shall wisdom be found?” in the parallel phrases,

“Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man.”

#### CANTICLES, OR SONG OF SONGS

“Love is strong as death;  
Jealousy is cruel as the grave;  
The flashes thereof are flashes of fire,  
A very flame of the Lord.  
Many waters cannot quench love,  
Neither can the floods drown it,  
If a man should give all the substance of his house for love,  
He would be utterly condemned.”

The book called The Song of Songs is one of the most remark-

able in all the Bible. Regarded frankly as a love song, it is an exquisite poem, singing in impassioned fervor the joy and delight of the tender passion. Love is its theme, and the lines we have quoted above give the gist and flavor of the whole song. There is no hint or suggestion in the book that it is anything more or less than it appears to be—a love song. But the propensity to allegory was so strong in the later Hebrew writings, and the habit of setting forth deep spiritual truth in poetic imagery drawn from every field of human experience, that the interpreters of such literature are apt to look for spiritual teaching in words that on the surface had no such meaning, and possibly to find much that the authors never dreamed of teaching.

This tendency to allegorize in the interpretation of Scripture is still strong in the minds of many, and has led to the most diverse and sometimes fanciful views as to the teaching of certain passages—notably the later chapters of the book of Daniel.

It is indeed extremely difficult to know just how far the words of some parts of Scripture are to be taken literally, and how much is poetic and picturesque. The only rule that seems safe to follow is to interpret literally the words of every passage unless there is some clear intimation in the book itself that they are intended in some figurative sense.

In the great majority of cases there is no difficulty in applying this rule. In the prophecies of Zechariah, for example, or Ezekiel, while we may not always find it easy to determine just what the author does mean, we are quite sure that he does not mean to be taken literally—that he is teaching something in parable or allegory.

In the case of the Song of Songs, the interpreters have differed widely in their views. Very soon after the book was written we find it understood as a parable, in which the relation of Jehovah to his chosen people is presented under the form of an allegory of the lover and his bride. In the Christian Church this interpretation has very generally prevailed, only substituting Christ

and his Church in the place of Jehovah and Israel.

But this view has very often been disputed, and in recent years the more common interpretation has taken it as literal—a love song, celebrating just what on the face of it it seems to celebrate, that is, the joys and felicities of conjugal affection—love. The lines quoted above are from the latter part of the book and seem to sum up and embody the gist and message of the whole: “Love is stronger than death.”

And it is certainly fit and proper that a great moral compendium, as the Bible is, should give consideration to this emotion, for there is no other affection or impulse or passion that is more influential in our lives. There is no holier emotion, none whose purity and right direction is so fundamental to the happiness and welfare of the human race. It is the sweetest and most sacred of all human affections.

It is most unfortunate that our conscious concupiscence has made us unduly reticent on this subject, and has promoted a sort of monkish prudery in respect to all that pertains to love and marriage.

Never was religious zeal more grossly misapplied than when it disparaged the relation of holy matrimony and gave the place of highest honor to the unnatural state of celibacy.

In thus assigning to virginity a higher place than that of motherhood, and honoring the monk above the father, it did violence to Nature, and condemned the very ordinance of the Creator; separated that which God has joined together and taught a false and dangerous doctrine.

Very much of the shameful disorder of our social life and the misery of domestic relations, and the disgusting revelations of our divorce courts, with their long train of social evils are due to a false attitude of mind toward this affection. This love, which should be an intense and holy passion drawing one man and one woman together and binding them in the sacred bonds of true marriage, has been treated so lightly or so grossly that it



has come to mean almost anything, from the coarsest form of bestial lust to the silly infatuation of light-headed fancy. The prudery of misguided modesty and the prurience of corrupt imagination combine to form a false and foolish notion of love, and it is for the most part treated either as a pretty sentiment, rather soft and undignified; or as a mere sensuous passion, more or less lascivious. Both these conceptions are utterly unworthy of the name, and their current acceptance in literature and art and common usage is most pernicious.

The Holy Scriptures never descend to the silly simpering conventionality of regarding this tender emotion as a joke, nor do they ever disparage it by any suggestion that it is unholy or undignified. To the pure all things are pure, and "evil is to him who evil thinks." The Song of Songs is the love song of love songs. It is the fervid, ingenuous and unabashed outpouring of a lover's joy and devotion. It is the sweetest and purest and noblest of all amatory poems, a worthy expression of the strongest and sweetest of human affections. As the Psalms are the best expression of our religious emotions—of the joys and hopes and aspirations of our religious nature, so this poem is the outburst of the natural affections which are the very crown and flower of our social nature.

It is the inspired revelation of the place and dignity of love in the divine order of human society.

#### THE BOOK OF LAMENTATIONS

There seems to be no reasonable doubt that this book was written by the prophet Jeremiah; though the zeal of some distinctive critics has led them to attack its genuineness. The arguments against the belief that it is his seem very feeble and far-fetched, and utterly inadequate to the task of overthrowing the well-established tradition of its authorship, or to account for the obvious similarity of thought and point of view between these poems and Jeremiah's book of prophecy.

Not that it makes much difference whether it was written by him or some one else, but it is rather tiresome to have to turn aside from the study of such splendid literature to read the labored pedantry of those whose eyes have become near-sighted through their constant peering through the microscope of verbal criticism, often with very poor light. This we say advisedly; and without disparagement of the excellent work of higher criticism, and in fullest recognition of the debt we owe to the biblical scholarship of our day.

The Book of Lamentations is composed of five short poems—corresponding to the five chapters of our English version.

The subject of all is the same—the desolation of Judah and Jerusalem after it was destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar.

The literary form of the different poems is somewhat varied, the third being most highly artificial, and the fifth almost entirely prose.

The following outline may serve as an introduction to the contents of the book:

I. Chapter 1:1-11. The author speaks in his own person, and describes the desolation of the city and mourns her low estate.

II. Chapter 1:11-22. Jerusalem personified speaks for herself, crying, "See, O Lord, and behold; for I am become vile.

"Is it nothing to you all ye that pass by?

"Behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow."

III. 11:1-12. The second song opens, as the first did, with the poet speaking. He ascribes the afflictions of the city of God and wonders at the misery he had brought upon his people.

IV. 11:13-19. The author addresses the desolate city:

"What shall I testify unto thee: What shall I liken unto thee,  
O daughter of Jerusalem?

"What shall I equal to thee, that I may comfort thee, O virgin  
daughter of Zion?

"Is this the city men called the perfection of beauty, the joy of the whole earth?"

V. 11:20-22. Again the personified city—or wall of the city—speaks in a prayer or cry of greatest anguish:

"See, O Lord, and behold, to whom thou hast done this.

"Shall the women eat their fruit, the children that are dandled in their hands?"

VI. Chapter 111:1-18. The author now identifies himself with the afflicted city, saying, "I am the man that hath seen affliction by the rod of his wrath.

"He hath led me and caused me to walk in darkness and not in light.

"Surely against me he turneth his hand again and again all the day."

He bemoans his sad condition and seems to sink in despair, saying,

"My strength is perished, and mine expectation from the Lord."

VII. 111:19-38. Then he turned to God in prayer, and he meditated on God's mercy and justice: "This I recall to mind, therefore have I hope.

"It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not."

He reflects on the uses of adversity. "It is good that a man should hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord. It is good for a man to bear the yoke in his youth."

His hope brightens with this comforting thought:

"For the Lord will not cast off forever. For though he cause grief, yet will he have compassion according to the multitude of his mercies.

"For he doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men."

VIII. 111:39-66. Again he turns to lamentation over the

misery of his low estate; blending his personal afflictions with the desolation of the city, and gives thanks that God had heard his cry out of the dungeon.

"Thou in the day that I called upon thee. Thou saidst, 'Fear not'."

And this song ends with a prayer for righteous retribution on those who have destroyed them.

IX. IV:1-12. The first section of the fourth poem is a dirge, depicting the misery of the people in highly poetic figures:

"How is the gold become dim! and the most fine gold changed!"

"The precious sons of Zion are comparable to fine gold, how are they esteemed as earthen pitchers, the work of the hands of the potter!"

Then he specified in detail the horrors of the time:

"The hands of the pitiful women have sodden their own children; they were their meat in the destruction of the daughter of my people.

"The Lord hath accomplished his fury; he hath poured out his fierce anger."

X. IV:13-22. He puts the blame upon the prophets and the priests, who failed to teach the way of righteousness, and are therefore guilty of "the blood of the just." Therefore, they were judged of God, and lost the respect of the people.

The false hope which the priests and prophets looked for from Egypt was utterly disappointed, and the vindictive enmity of Edom is gratified. But the poem ends with the note of hope:

"The punishment of thine iniquity is accomplished, O daughter of Zion; he will no more carry thee away into captivity; he will visit thine iniquity, O daughter of Edom; he will discover thy sins."

XI. V:1-22. The whole of the last song is a prayer. It is only slightly poetic; being, for the most part, a summing up of all that has been said, and a fervent plea for God's compassion

and restoring grace.

“Remember, O Lord, what is come upon us;  
Behold, and see our reproach.”

Then, after concrete examples of their misery, closing with this prayer:

“Thou, O Lord, abideth forever;  
Thy throne is from generation to generation;  
Wherefore dost thou forget us forever,  
And forsake us so long time?  
“Turn us again unto thee, O Lord, and we shall be turned.”

The chief thoughts of the book may be summed up in these five points:

First; A most pitiful outpouring of grief on account of the desolation of the city and the nation.

Second; A clear recognition of the fact that it was God's act—the second causes are scarcely noticed.

Third; That God is just, and had dealt with them in justice tempered with mercy.

Fourth; That their affliction was for their good, to correct them and call them back from utter moral ruin.

Fifth; The hope of restoration and ultimate peace and glory is never relinquished. Discouraged, distressed, and overwhelmed with grief, yet never despairing, the prophet chants the dirge of a dead past, but comforts his soul in the hope of a better day to dawn, when the fullness of God's time should come.

It is a cry *de profundus*, a prayer “from the belly of hell”, the call of a soul in anguish, but it has the ring of hope and confidence in God.

The form of the poems which compose the book is highly

artificial, but not less artistic.

The first four chapters are acrostic,—each verse beginning with a different letter in the Hebrew alphabet in their order. Each poem—each chapter, has therefore twenty-two verses, as there are twenty-two letters in the Hebrew alphabet. The third poem, however, which is the climax of the book, has three parts to each verse—as shown in the printing of our revised version.

The poetic beauty of the book can only be appreciated fully by careful study of it verse by verse; but even ordinary reading of it cannot fail to give impressions of somber but exquisite beauty. It is especially profitable to ponder on the awful realities of human life in an age like ours, so full of sunshine and so intolerant of shadow. There are shadows and darkness, and we do well to lay it to heart, for, “It is of the Lord’s mercies that *we* are not consumed, because his compassions fail not.”

#### THE BOOK OF DANIEL

This is composed of two distinct and separate parts which are so different that they have scarcely anything in common but the name.

The first six chapters are composed of six stories of Daniel and his three friends, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah.

These young men were of the Jewish nobility, and had been selected out of the captives brought from Jerusalem to Babylon in the first captivity, and, by the king’s command, were to be educated in the learning and the tongue of the Chaldeans.

The six stories told of them are:

- I. Daniel and the king’s meat.
- II. Nebuchadnezzar’s dream interpreted by Daniel.
- III. Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego in the fiery furnace.
- IV. Nebuchadnezzar’s second dream and its fulfillment.

- V. The story of Belshazzar's feast.  
VI. The story of Daniel in the den of lions.

All these stories are told with exquisite literary art, and are the classic examples of manly purity and integrity of purpose.

In the story of their refusal to eat of the king's meat we have the theme of loyalty to one's religious customs, even where the principles involved are not of the first importance. The distinction of clean and unclean meat was a minor matter, but it was a part of their religion, and, therefore, not to be lightly set aside.

*Integrity* is a great word; by etymology it signifies untouched, unbroken, whole; and it thus expresses that strict and punctilious regard for righteousness that refuses to compromise, but defends the outposts as well as the citadel of the soul. It is well put first in the stories of Daniel, for nothing is more fundamental in character. Youth especially is vulnerable at this point. It is apt to yield too easily on minor matters; it fears the reproach of bigotry, and seldom realizes the insidious nature of sin, or the force of evil associations. Integrity is the feature of character portrayed by this and two others of these stories,—the story of the three young men who refused to worship the image of the king, and were cast into the fiery furnace; and the story of Daniel's bold stand for freedom of worship and his consequent casting to the lions.

Few stories ever written are so widely known, or so much admired; for the appeal they make to our admiration of the quietly heroic is very strong and very simple. Their deliverance is spectacular enough, but their conduct is free from ostentation. In all these stories the heroism consisted in the quiet, unobtrusive, *loyalty to conscience* and religious faith. It is probable that the character of these men, as shown by these stories, accounts for this book being classed with the Hagiology, rather than with prophecy, though the latter part of the book is all

prophetic.

The other three stories contain prophecy, but are more strictly biographical; they are more immediately stories of Daniel than predictions of events; but their permanent value is due to the latter rather than the former feature.

The vision of the great image of gold and silver and brass and iron mixed with clay is well accounted one of the wonderful revelations of the Old Testament. Few prophecies are so definite, and fewer have been so literally fulfilled.

The four kingdoms symbolized by the four metals which composed the great image which Nebuchadnezzar saw in his dream are easily identified as the Babylonian, of which Nebuchadnezzar was king, then the Medo Persian, then the Grecian, then the Roman. And, in the time of the Roman Empire, Jesus was born king of the Jews, and established the kingdom "which shall never be destroyed."

In the fact that this kingdom is described as a "stone cut out of the mountain without hands," we have the intimation that it would be not of human origin, but the immediate work of the will and act of God.

The story of Belshazzar's feast is probably the most brilliant bit of tragedy ever written in any language, as may be proved by the strong impression it has made on the imagination of so many generations of men—probably no historic incident is so widely familiar.

The second part of the book differs from the first in that Daniel is not the hero, but the author. He speaks in the first person and writes of his own experience only to certify the genuineness of the revelations which God gave by him.

The prophecies are exceedingly obscure and are not interpreted with any certainty. Most of them seem to deal with the far distant future, with the tumult of the nations and the fall of kings and empires, and the final triumph of the kingdom of God in all the earth.



Prophecies so vague and so highly symbolic are naturally an attractive field for visionary and spectacular minds and have been the subject of a great variety of erratic and fantastic theorizing; but about all that can be certainly affirmed is the absolute confidence of the prophet's hope: hope for the full and final glory of those things for which the seed of Abraham stood.

But the parts of the book that are of special interest in relation to the other books of the hagiography are both simple and instructive. Their ethical import is clear and forceful, presenting in attractive form the excellence and beauty of *moral integrity* and *religious loyalty*.

Such are, in briefest outline, the varied messages of these holy writings; a brilliant cluster of the most beautiful gems of literature; a galaxy of precious truths that shine upon the dark and sinful world. But more than that, they form a systematic and harmonious scheme, a full-orbed revelation of the divine ideal of human life, suitable to every age and every land; composed of truth unchanging as the pole star, as immutable as God.

In Ruth we have the glory of the commonplace, the sweetness of the simple life.

In Esther, depicted in more brilliant colors, is the dramatic heroism of self-sacrifice for the public good, the artistic expression of the sentiment, "a public office is a public trust," and social eminence means *opportunity for service*.

In Job, poetic art is at its highest; and its message is well worthy of its fine presentation—confidence in God and the wisdom of bringing every thought into subjection to the obedience of Him.

The Psalms are the responses of the soul that has such confidence, and the joy of such obedience.

The Proverbs give the light we need to shine upon our daily path, that we may "let our way be established and ponder the path of our feet." The "Preacher" shows the emptiness of things "under the sun," and sums the duty of man in two great

simple words, "Fear God and keep his commandments."

Then Canticles sings the old sweet song of love, the favorite theme of song since men began to sing. A song too often smirched with beastiality and lust; but here, in all its purity, it has its place among the lovely things wherewith God blessed the race of man.

In Lamentations, the weeping prophet, whose tears fall day and night for the slain of the daughter of his people, sings still a psalm of hope unquenchable, and confidence invincible, that the mercies of the Lord shall fail not, while day and night endure.

"They are new every morning;  
Great is thy faithfulness,  
The Lord is my portion, saith my soul;  
Therefore will I hope in him."

And, last of all, the charming stories of the book of Daniel stir the blood and brighten the eye with admiration of a manly heroism that knows no compromise, nor counts the cost of loyalty to conscience, and the preservation of *Integrity*.

So this group of ancient classics of the Hebrew race "sings to one clear harp in divers tones" the glory of living on a plane exalted to the dignity of human destiny, as human destiny is planned and purposed by the great Creator.

## CHAPTER XXVI

### THE FULLNESS OF THE TIME

**T**HERE are two great events of human history—two that stand so high above all others that they are lonely by their own grandeur. The first of these was the creation of man in the image of God. The second was the coming of the Son of God to take our nature and become man.

These facts were not mere accidents of human history; nor were they the result of any process of evolution. Yet they were not mere arbitrary interventions of divine sovereignty. Both were articulated with the whole world's history. Both were epoch making events,—points of new departure, to which the evolution of the race led up, and from which the course of human history runs in new channels, but ever onward to the goal ordained for man before the world was made.

It is impossible for us, poor creatures of a day to comprehend the thoughts of God. "It is high as heaven; what canst thou do? Deeper than sheol; what canst thou know? The measure thereof is longer than the earth, and broader than the sea."

Yet God has never left us in utter darkness. He gave us an instinct of righteousness. Our first parents in the Garden of Eden knew that "God hath said", and in all the ages "the work of the law was written in men's hearts, their conscience bearing witness therewith and their thoughts one with another accusing or else excusing them."

But though men are without the excuse of ignorance, they had misused their knowledge and corrupted their affections, till they could neither clearly see the truth nor love the good which they could apprehend. And for the great love wherewith he

loved us God ordained a means of our salvation. The central fact of this gracious plan for our salvation, was the incarnation of the Son of God.

We have followed the course of the revelations by which God prepared a nation, a church, a chosen group of men devout and spiritually minded, who could mediate this world-wide work of redemption from sin to holiness. Some of these were prophets, seers to whom and by whom he revealed his will. Some were devout and humble followers of his revelation, and by the light of revelation, and the experience of holy living, the world was ripened for the great event of history,—the incarnation of the Son of God. "And when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son." But this fullness of the time included more than the training of the "chosen seed of Israel's race" for its special function as the priest of the world. It embraced the world. The church is Catholic, and has never recognized a narrower mission. The world is the beneficiary of the good will of God, and was prepared for the fullness of that time when our Lord should appear for its redemption.

Now we have seen that for some four hundred years, before the coming of our Lord, the voice of Hebrew prophecy was silent. Four hundred years of which we have no record in the Bible. But they were by no means empty years; on the contrary, they were years of wonderful activity.

The captivity had brought the Jews in contact with the world at many points. From the time of Solomon they had been traders, and were already well qualified by their experience to profit by the opportunities thrust upon them when carried away from their land. They became by necessity just what they have been ever since, a commercial people, a nation of traders, bankers, peddlers and middlemen in the commercial world. In this field they manifested, from the first, an aptitude, which developing with exercise has made them the greatest commercial race the world has ever known. Their vocation as traders naturally

led them to all the cities and towns that offered commercial opportunity, and so we find them from the time of the captivity spreading more and more widely over the civilized world. When they were permitted to return to their own land very few of them cared to do so, and those who did return, were for the most part, those who were not prospering where they were, while the wealthy and prosperous chose rather to remain where they were doing well, rather than to return to their ruined cities and impoverished people.

Thus it came to pass that the Jewish people were scattered by their own choice through every country from India to Spain and from Egypt to the barbarous regions of the north.

But they did not cease to be Jews. They rarely intermarried with the peoples among whom they sojourned, and still more rarely adopted their religion.

They built their synagogues in every city and town where there were sufficient numbers of them, and there met for the reading of the law and for fellowship. Thus they kept alive the spirit of patriotism and loyalty to the religion of their fathers. They cheerfully contributed their yearly stipend to the support of the religious ordinances in Jerusalem, and found great comfort in the fact that they were partakers in the worship, which the white-robed priests with solemn services offered day by day with the morning and evening sacrifice at the holy temple of Jehovah, God of Israel.

Thus developed that remarkable race that for more than two thousand years has been just what it is today, a patriotic people, though without a country; an exclusive people, though scattered among all nations; a religious solidarity with no corporate organization.

Our present interest in this development of Jewish history is because of the very prominent part which these dispersed but loyal groups of worshipers had to perform in the spread of the gospel through the world, as we shall see when we come to study

the Acts of the Apostles.

But the "fullness of the time" involved much more than the development of Jewish history; and, in order to understand the story of Redemption, we must go outside of the Hebrew Scriptures and note the changes that took place in the world during those years of which we have no record in the Bible.

This period was one of marvelous activity. During the time between the last of the prophets and the birth of Jesus of Nazareth, we have almost the whole of Greek philosophy and most of its poetry and art. We have the Rise of the Roman Empire and the development of our western civilization. From Socrates and Plato to Virgil and Horace—almost the whole of classic literature. From Alexander to Augustus,—the great age of empire building. From Pericles to Cicero, from the Parthenon to the Roman Forum—the golden age of art.

The civil law that forms the bed rock of almost every modern constitution,—all these and other great achievements belong to those four centuries. No other period of equal length can show so large a list of distinguished names and great works in so many fields. It was a period of reconstruction when the old order changed, giving place to new.

For some two thousand years,—from the days of Abraham to the days of Zachariah, we followed, in the Old Testament, the fortunes of the great empires of the ancient world. Egypt and Babylon, Philistia and Tyre and Edom and Moab lie along the visible horizon of the Hebrew nation, and were the great figures, not only in the history of Israel, but of the world.

When we turn the page to the New Testament we find ourselves in an entirely new world. Babylon and Nineveh and Edom and Tyre and Philistia have disappeared. Egypt is the only familiar name, and it is but a Roman province, the merest shadow of her former greatness. The Medo-Persian Empire that stretched from India to Egypt has come and gone. The spectacular career of Alexander has run its brief and brilliant

course; and the heavy arm of Imperial Rome bears rule in every part of the western world.

When we consider the world as it was when Jesus came, we may observe three changes that are especially significant in the history of redemption.

First; The heathen religions are all discredited. The old idolatry of Egypt and the east has fallen like Dagon in his temple, Baal and Astarte, Chemosh and Moloch are little more than vague and spectral figures of an outgrown and vanished superstition. Their very names do not appear in the New Testament.

The younger gods of Greece are still in vogue, but have lost their influence on all men of intelligence; they were to the enlightened Greek or Roman little more than they are to us—mere figures of speech, poetic symbols for old nature's forces, or the personification of some trait of human character.

It was an age of universal skepticism. Reason had repudiated the ancient faiths, and the very agurs grinned at one another as they exploited the ignorance of the rabble for their selfish profit.

Such was the spiritual bankruptcy of the time that it had nothing to offer that could satisfy the religious instincts of humanity, or answer to the hunger of the soul for fellowship with God.

Yet there was a vague mysterious presentment that something was about to come. "The people were in expectation" and wise men of the east, stirred by this premonition, followed the star of Bethlehem to worship the new born king of the Jews.

The second feature of the time that was of special importance was the almost universal spread of Greek civilization. The political and military power of Alexander was short lived; but it accomplished one thing of immense importance. It spread Greek culture over all the earth. The Greek tongue and habit of thought followed the sword of Greece, and flourished long after that sword was broken and eaten of rust. So that, when Jesus

began to teach in Galilee and in Judea, the Greek tongue was familiar in every town and city of commercial importance in the civilized world. Thus there was ready to hand the finest instrument of thought and most perfect means of expression that the world has ever known.

It was the great highway by which the gospel could go to the ends of the earth. It was the form of civilization that has extended and increased in power down to the present time, and, today, dominates the world from pole to pole.

The third feature of the time was the supremacy of the Roman Empire. It was the golden age of that great power which more than any other, has shaped the modern world and made it what it is. Rome was the hammer by which God beat the plastic nations of that period into the forms that they have to a marvelous degree retained down to the present day. Rome drilled the nations into such habits of order and obedience to law that, even through the doleful centuries that followed her supremacy, they retained the habits and preserved the potency which at length revived and flourished in the nations of our present time.

When we consider how these various achievements of mankind had, each in their independent fields, developed side by side; how each had reached the very point of its development best suited for the introduction of a new and higher form of moral and religious truth, when each had reached the limit of its own peculiar province and had spent its force,—for art and literature and philosophy have never advanced beyond the limits reached by Greece, Roman law and military prowess have not been surpassed,—we cannot but be impressed by the simple phrase of the great apostle “When the fullness of the time had come,” “when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth his son.”



## CONCLUSION

As we close this brief and superficial study of these great Hebrew books, two impressions will certainly remain in every thoughtful mind.

One of these will be the thought that we have only glimpsed the grandeur of the themes presented by these men who spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.

We have seen the Bible, as one who stands upon the shore may say he sees the ocean. He does see it, and may be much impressed by its vast extent—its majesty and power; but he has seen only the smallest fraction of its bulk and received but the faint whisper of its power. Its sublime and awful majesty, its profound depths and marvelous content are only hinted by all he sees. So the observations we have taken of the Word of God are but a faint and feeble hint of glorious revelations God has given in these books.

At his best, the student of the Bible is constrained to say as Job said when he considered the wonderful works of God's creative wisdom:

"Lo, these are but the outskirts of his ways. How small a whisper do we hear of him. The thunder of his power, who can understand."

The other thought is, that the revelations given in these books are wonderfully plain and simple. It is not a revelation veiled in mystery, or shrouded in darkness; not occult oracles to be interpreted by laborious scholarship, but an open book, intelligible, distinct, and for the most part easily understood. It is a book for all men, everywhere and always, a lamp to our feet and a light to our path.

True, it has depths that challenge to profoundest philosophy to understand, and visions of hope that exceed the powers of

imagination; but the way of life is so clearly marked that the wayfaring man, yea fools, shall not err therein.

It is a river of salvation flowing through the ages, a great flood that brings life wherever its waters come, and whosoever will may take of this water of life freely.

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